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THE WORLD'S BEST ONE HUNDRED DETECTIVE STORIES

(IN TEN VOLUMES)

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

VOLUME TEN

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THE WORLD'S BEST 100 DETECTIVE STORIES

HERBERT JENKINS

THE STOLEN ADMIRALTY MEMORANDUM

I

"WELL," cried Tims, one Saturday night, as he pushed open the kitchen door of the little flat he occupied over the garage. "How's the cook, the stove, and the supper?"

"I'm busy," said Mrs. Tims, a little, fair woman, with blue eyes, an impertinent nose, and the inspiration of neatness in her dress, as she altered the position of a saucepan on the stove and put two plates into the oven to warm.

This was the invariable greeting between husband and wife. Tims went up behind her, gripped her elbows to her side, and kissed her noisily.

"I told you I was busy," she said.

"You did, Emmelina," he responded. "I heard you say so, and how's his Nibs?"

The last remark was addressed to an object that was crawling towards him with incoherent cries and gurgles of delight. Stooping down, Tims picked up his eighteen-months-old son and held him aloft, chuckling and mouthing his glee.

"You'll drop him one of these days," said Mrs. Tims, "and then there'll be a pretty hullaballoo."

(From "Malcolm Sage, Detective," by Herbert Jenkins. Copyright, 1921, by George H. Doran Company, New York, and Herbert Jenkins, Ltd., London.)

"Well, he's fat enough to bounce," was the retort. "Ain't you, Jimmy?"

Neither Tims nor Mrs. Tims seemed to be conscious that without variations these same remarks had been made night after night, week after week, month after month.

"How's Mr. Sage?" was the question with which Mrs. Tims always followed the reference to the bouncing of Jimmy.

"Like Johnny Walker, still going strong," glibly came the reply, just as it came every other night. "He was asking about you to-day," added Tims.

"About me?" Mrs. Tims turned, all attention, her cooking for the time forgotten.

"Yes, wanted to know when I was going to divorce you."

"Don't be silly, Jim," she cried. "What did he say, really now?" she added as she turned once more to the stove.

"Oh! he just asked if you were well," replied Tims, more interested in demonstrating with the person of his son how an aeroplane left the ground than in his wife's question.

"Anything else?" enquired Mrs. Tims, prodding a potato with a fork to see if it was done.

Tims was not deceived by the casual tone in which the question was asked. He was wont to say that, if his wife wanted his back teeth, she would get them.

"Nothing, my dear, only to ask if his Nibs was flourishin'," and with a gurgle of delight the aeroplane soared towards the ceiling.

Mrs. Tims had not forgotten the time when Malcolm Sage visited her several times when she was ill with pneumonia. She never tired of telling her friends of his wonderful knowledge of household affairs. He had talked to her of cooking, of childish ailments, of shopping, in a way that had amazed her. His knowledge seemed universal. He had explained to her among other things how cracknel biscuits were made and why croup was so swift in its action.

Tims vowed that the Chief had done her more good than the doctor, and from that day Malcolm Sage had occupied chief place in Mrs. Tims's valhalla.

"Quaint sort o' chap, the Chief," Tims would remark sometimes in connection with some professional episode.

"Pity you're not as quaint," would flash back the retort from Mrs. Tims, whose conception of loyalty was more literal than that of her husband.

Supper finished and his Nibs put to bed, Tims proceeded to enjoy his pipe and evening paper, whilst Mrs. Tims got out her sewing. From time to time Tims's eyes would wander over towards the telephone in the corner.

Finally he folded up the paper, and proceeded to knock out the ashes from his pipe preparatory to going to bed. His eyes took a last look at the telephone just as Mrs. Tims glanced up.

"Don't sit there watching that telephone," she cried, "anyone would think you were wanting——"

"Brrrrrrr—brrrrrrr—brrrrrr," went the bell.

"Now perhaps you're happy," cried Mrs. Tims as he rose to answer the call, whilst she put on the kettle to make hot coffee to fill the thermos flasks without which she never allowed the car to go out at night. It was her tribute to "the Chief."

II

In his more expansive moments Malcolm Sage would liken himself to a general practitioner in a diseased-infected district. It is true that there was no speaking-tube, with its terrifying whistle, a few feet from his head; but the telephone by his bedside was always liable to arouse him from sleep at any hour of the night.

As Tims had folded up his newspaper with a view to bed, Malcolm Sage was removing his collar before the mirror on his dressing-table, when his telephone bell rang. Rogers, his man, looked interrogatingly at his master, who, shaking his head, passed over to the instrument and took up the receiver.

"Yes, this is Malcolm Sage—Speaking—Yes." Then for a few minutes he listened with an impassive face. "I'll be off within ten minutes—The Towers, Holdingham, near Guildford—I understand."

While he was speaking, Rogers, a little sallow-faced man with fish-like eyes and expressionless face, had moved over to the other telephone and was droning in a monotonous, uninflected voice, "Chief wants car in five minutes."

It was part of Malcolm Sage's method to train his subordinates to realise the importance of intelligent and logical inference.

Returning to the dressing-table, Malcolm Sage took up another collar, slipped a tie between the fold, and proceeded to put it on.

As he did so he gave instructions to Rogers, who, notebook in hand, and with an expression of indifference that seemed to say "Kismet," silently recorded his instructions.

"My address will be The Towers, Holdingham, near Guildford. Be on the look-out for messages."

Without a word Rogers closed the book and, picking up a suit-case, which was always ready for emergencies, he left the room. Two minutes later Malcolm Sage followed and, without a word, entered the closed car that had just drawn up before his flat in the Adelphi.

Rogers returned to the flat, switched the telephone on to his own room, and prepared himself for the night, whilst Malcolm Sage, having eaten a biscuit and drunk some of Mrs. Tims's hot coffee, lay back to sleep as the car rushed along the Portsmouth road.

III

In the library at The Towers three men were seated, their faces lined and drawn as if some great misfortune had suddenly descended upon them; yet their senses were alert. They were listening.

"He ought to be here any minute now," said Mr. Llewellyn John, the Prime Minister, taking out his watch for the hundredth time.

Sir Lyster Grayne, First Lord of the Admiralty, shook his head.

"He should do it in an hour," said Lord Beamdale, the Secretary of War, "if he's got a man who knows the road."

"Sage is sure——" began Sir Lyster; then he stopped abruptly, and turned in the direction of the further window.

A soft tapping as of a finger-nail upon a pane of glass was clearly distinguishable. It ceased for a few seconds, recommenced, then ceased again.

Mr. Llewellyn John looked first at Sir Lyster and then on towards where Lord Beamdale sat, heavy of frame and impassive of feature.

Sir Lyster rose and walked quickly over to the window. As he approached the tapping recommenced. Swinging back the curtain he disappeared into the embrasure.

The others heard the sound of the window being raised and then closed again. A moment later Malcolm Sage appeared, followed by Sir Lyster, who once more drew the curtain.

At the sight of Malcolm Sage, Mr. Llewellyn John's features relaxed from their drawn, tense expression. A look of relief flashed momentarily into Lord Beamdale's fish-like eyes.

"Thank God you've come, Sage!" cried Mr. Llewellyn John, with a sigh of relief as he grasped Malcolm Sage's hand as if it had been a lifebelt and he a drowning man. "I think you have met Lord Beamdale," he added.

Malcolm Sage bowed to the War Minister, then with great deliberation removed his overcoat, carefully folded it, and placed it upon a chair, laying his cap on top. He then selected a chair at the table that gave him a clear view of the faces of the three Ministers, and sat down.

"Why did you come to the window?" enquired Sir

Lyster, as he resumed his own seat. "Did you know this was the library?"

"I saw a crack of light between the curtains," replied Malcolm Sage. "It may be desirable that no one should know I have been here," he added.

"Something terrible has happened, Sage," broke in the Prime Minister, his voice shaking with excitement. He had with difficulty contained himself whilst Malcolm Sage was taking off his overcoat and explaining his reason for entering by the window. "It's—it's——" His voice broke.

"Perhaps Sir Lyster will tell me, or Lord Beamdale," suggested Malcolm Sage, looking from one to the other.

Lord Beamdale shook his head.

"Just a bare outline, Sir Lyster," said Malcolm Sage, spreading out his fingers before him.

Slowly, deliberately, and with perfect self-possession, Sir Lyster explained what had happened.

"The Prime Minister and Lord Beamdale came down with me on Thursday night to spend the week-end," he said. "Incidentally we were to discuss a very important matter connected with this country's er—foreign policy." The hesitation was only momentary. "Lord Beamdale brought with him a document of an extremely private nature. This I had sent to him earlier in the week for consideration and comment.

"If that document were to get to a certain Embassy in London no one can foretell the calamitous results. It might even result in another war, if not now certainly later. It was, I should explain, of a private and confidential nature, and consequently quite frankly expressed."

"And you must remember——" began Mr. Llewellyn John excitedly.

"One moment, sir," said Malcolm Sage quietly, without looking up from an absorbed contemplation of a bronze letter-weight fashioned in the form of a sphinx.

Mr. Llewellyn John sank back into his chair, and Sir Lyster resumed.

"Just over an hour and a half ago, that is to say soon

after eleven o'clock, it was discovered that the document in question was missing, and in its place had been substituted a number of sheets of blank paper."

"Unless it's found, Sage," cried Mr. Llewellyn John, jumping up from his chair in his excitement, "the consequences are too awful to contemplate."

For a few seconds he strode up and down the room, then returning to his chair, sank back into its comfortable depths.

"Where was the document kept?" enquired Malcolm Sage, his long, sensitive fingers stroking the back of the sphinx.

"In the safe," replied Sir Lyster, indicating with a nod a small safe let into the wall.

"You are in the habit of using it for valuable documents?" queried Malcolm Sage.

"As a matter of fact very seldom. It is mostly empty," was the reply.

"Why?"

"I have a larger safe in my dressing-room, in which I keep my papers. During the day I occasionally use this to save going up and down stairs."

"Where do you keep the key?"

"When there is anything in the safe I always carry it about with me."

"And at other times?"

"Sometimes in a drawer in my writing-table," said Sir Lyster; "but generally I have it on me."

"When was the document put into the safe?"

"At a quarter to eight to-night, just as the second dressing-gong was sounding."

"And you yourself put it in, locked the door, and have retained the key ever since?" Malcolm Sage had exhausted the interest of the sphinx and was now drawing diagrams with his forefinger upon the morocco surface of the table.

Sir Lyster nodded.

"I put the key in the pocket of my evening vest when I changed," he said. "After the other guests had retired,

the Prime Minister raised a point that necessitated reference to the document itself. It was then I discovered the substitution."

"But for that circumstance the safe would not have been opened until when?" queried Malcolm Sage.

"Late to-night, when I should have transferred the packet to the safe in my dressing-room."

"Would you have examined the contents?"

"No. It is my rule to cut adrift from official matters from dinner-time on Saturday until after breakfast on Monday. It was only in deference to the Prime Minister's particular wish that we referred to the document to-night."

"I take it that the rule you mention is known to your guests and servants?"

"Certainly."

"There is no doubt that it was the document itself that you put in the safe?"

"None; the Prime Minister and Lord Beamdale saw me do it."

"No doubt whatever," corroborated Mr. Llewellyn John, whilst Lord Beamdale wagged his head like a mandarin.

"Does anyone else know that it is missing?" asked Malcolm Sage after a short pause.

Sir Lyster shook his head.

"Only we three; and, of course, the thief," he added.

Malcolm Sage nodded. He had tired of the diagrams, and now sat stroking the back of his head.

"Has anyone left the house since the discovery; that is, as far as you know?" he queried at length.

"No one," said Sir Lyster.

"The servants, of course, have access to this room?"

"Yes; but only Walters, my butler, is likely to come here in the evening, except, of course, my secretary."

"Where does he dine?"

"Miss Blair," corrected Sir Lyster, "always takes her meals in her own sitting-room, where she works. It is situated at the back of the house on the ground floor."

Again Malcolm Sage was silent, this time for a longer period.

"So far as you know, then," he said at length, addressing Sir Lyster, "only three people in the house were acquainted with the existence of the document; you, the Prime Minister, and Lord Beamdale."

Sir Lyster inclined his head.

"You are certain of that?" Malcolm Sage looked up swiftly and keenly. "Your secretary and Lady Grayne, for instance, they knew nothing about it?"

"Nothing; of that I am absolutely certain," replied Sir Lyster coldly.

"And the nature of the document?" enquired Malcolm Sage.

Sir Lyster looked across at Mr. Llewellyn John, who turned interrogatingly to Lord Beamdale.

"I am afraid it is of too private a nature to——" he hesitated.

"If you require me to trace something," said Malcolm Sage evenly, "you must at least tell me what that something is."

"It is a document which——" began Lord Beamdale, then he, too, paused.

"But, surely, Sage," broke in Mr. Llewellyn John, "it is not necessary to know the actual contents?"

"If you had lost something and would not tell me whether it was a dog or a diamond, would you expect me to find it?"

"But——" began Mr. Llewellyn John.

"I'm afraid we are wasting time, gentlemen," said Malcolm Sage, rising. "I would suggest Scotland Yard. The official police must work under any handicap imposed. I regret that I am unable to do so."

He walked across to the chair where lay his cap and coat.

"Now, Sage," said Mr. Llewellyn John tactfully, "you mustn't let us down, you really mustn't." Then turning to Sir Lyster, he said, "I can see his point. If he doesn't know the nature of the document, he cannot form a theory as to who is likely to have taken it. Perhaps under the circumstances, Grayne, we might take Sage into our

confidence; at least to such extent as he thinks necessary."

Sir Lyster made no response, whilst Lord Beamdale, whose economy in words had earned for him the sobriquet of "Lord Dumbeam," sat with impassive face.

"Perhaps I can help you," said Malcolm Sage, still standing by the chair on which lay his cap and coat. "At the end of every great war the Plans Departments of the Admiralty and the War Office are busy preparing for the next war. I suggest that this document was the Admiralty draft of a plan of operations to be put into force in the event of war occurring between this country and an extremely friendly power. It was submitted to the War Office for criticism and comment as far as land-operations were concerned. Another power, unfriendly to the friendly power, would find in this document a very valuable red-herring to draw across the path of its own perplexities."

"Good heavens!" cried Mr. Llewellyn John, starting upright in his chair. "How on earth did you know?"

"It seems fairly obvious," said Malcolm Sage, as he returned to his chair and resumed his stroking of the sphinx's back. "Who else knew of the existence of the document?" he enquired.

"No one outside the Admiralty and the War——" Sir Lyster stopped suddenly.

From the corridor, apparently just outside the library door, came the sound of a suppressed scream, followed by a bump against the woodwork.

Rising and moving swiftly across the room, Sir Lyster threw open the door, revealing a gap of darkness into which a moment later slid two figures, a pretty, fair-haired girl and a wizened little Japanese with large round spectacles and an automatic smile.

"I'm so sorry, Sir Lyster," faltered the girl, as she stepped timidly into the room, "but I was frightened. Someone had switched off the lights and I ran into——" She turned to the Japanese, who stood deprecating and nervous on the threshold.

"I lose my passage," he said, baring his teeth still further; "I go to find cigarette-case of my master. He leave it in beelyard-room. I go——"

With a motion of his hand, Sir Lyster dismissed the man, who slipped away as if relieved at getting off so lightly.

"You are up late, Miss Blair," he said coolly, turning to the girl.

"I'm so sorry," she said; "but Lady Grayne gave me some letters, and there was so much copying for you that——" She paused, then added nervously, "I didn't know it was so late."

"You had better go to bed, now," said Sir Lyster.

With a charming smile she passed out, Sir Lyster closing the door behind her. As he turned into the room his eye caught sight of the chair in which Malcolm Sage had been sitting.

"Where is Mr. Sage?" He looked from Mr. Llewellyn John to Lord Beamdale.

As he spoke Malcolm Sage appeared from the embrasure of the window through which he had entered, and where he had taken cover as Sir Lyster rose to open the door.

"You see, Sage is not supposed to be here," explained Mr. Llewellyn John.

"Your secretary has an expensive taste in perfume," remarked Malcolm Sage casually, as he resumed his seat. "It often characterises an intensely emotional nature," he added musingly.

"Emotional nature!" repeated Sir Lyster. "As a matter of fact she is extremely practical and self-possessed. You were saying——" he concluded with the air of a man who dismisses a trifling subject in favour of one of some importance.

"Diplomatists should be trained physiognomists," murmured Malcolm Sage. "A man's mouth rarely lies, a woman's never."

Sir Lyster stared.

"Now," continued Malcolm Sage, "I should like to know who is staying here."

Sir Lyster proceeded to give some details of the guests and servants. The domestic staff comprised twenty-one, and none had been in Sir Lyster's employ for less than three years. They were all excellent servants, of irreproachable character, who had come to him with good references. Seventeen of the twenty-one lived in the house. There were also four lady's maids and five men-servants attached to the guests. Among the men-servants was Sir Jeffrey Trawlor's Japanese valet.

There was something in Sir Lyster's voice as he mentioned this fact that caused Malcolm Sage to look up at him sharply.

"The man you have just seen," Sir Lyster explained. "He has been the cause of some little difficulty in the servants'-hall. They object to sitting down to meals with a Chinaman, as they call him."

"He seems intelligent?" remarked Malcolm Sage casually.

"On the contrary, he is an extremely stupid creature," was the reply. "He is continually losing himself. Only yesterday morning I myself found him wandering about the corridor leading to my own bedroom. Walters has also mentioned the matter to me."

Sir Lyster then passed on to the guests. They comprised Mrs. Selton, an aunt of Sir Lyster; Sir Jeffrey and Lady Trawlor, old friends of their hostess; Lady Whyndale and her two daughters. There were also Mr. Gerald Nash, M. P., and Mr. and Mrs. Richard Winnington, old friends of Sir Lyster and Lady Grayne.

"Later I may require a list of the guests," said Malcolm Sage, when Sir Lyster had completed his account. "You said, I think, that the key of the safe was sometimes left in an accessible place?"

"Yes, in a drawer."

"So that anyone having access to the room could easily have taken a wax impression."

Sir Lyster flushed slightly.

"There is no one——" he began.

"There is always a potential someone," corrected Mal-

colm Sage, raising his eyes suddenly and fixing them full upon Sir Lyster.

"The question is, Sage," broke in Mr. Llewellyn John tactfully, "what are we to do?"

"I should first like to see the inside of the safe and the dummy packet," said Malcolm Sage, rising. "No, I will open it myself if you will give me the key," he added, as Sir Lyster rose and moved over to the safe.

Taking the key, Malcolm Sage kneeled before the safe door and, by the light of an electric torch, surveyed the whole of the surface with keen-sighted eyes. Then placing the key in the lock he turned it, and swung back the door, revealing a long official envelope as the sole contents. This he examined carefully without touching it, his head thrust inside the safe.

"Is this the same envelope as that in which the document was enclosed?" he enquired, without looking round.

The three men had risen and were grouped behind Malcolm Sage, watching him with keen interest.

"It's the same kind of envelope, but——" began Sir Lyster, when Lord Beamdale interrupted.

"It's the envelope itself," he said. "I noticed that the right-hand top corner was bent in rather a peculiar manner."

Malcolm Sage rose and, taking out the envelope, carefully examined the damaged corner, which was bent and slightly torn.

"Yes, it's the same," cried Mr. Llewellyn John. "I remember tearing it myself when putting in the document."

"How many leaves of paper were there?" enquired Malcolm Sage.

"Eight, I think," replied Sir Lyster.

"Nine," corrected Lord Beamdale. "There was a leaf in front blank but for the words, 'Plans Department.'"

"Have you another document from the same Department?" enquired Malcolm Sage of Sir Lyster.

"Several."

"I should like to see one."

Sir Lyster left the room, and Malcolm Sage removed

the contents of the envelope. Carefully counting nine leaves of blank white foolscap, he bent down over the paper, with his face almost touching it.

When Sir Lyster re-entered with another document in his hand Malcolm Sage took it from him and proceeded to subject it to an equally close scrutiny, holding up to the light each sheet in succession.

"I suppose, Sir Lyster, you don't by any chance use scent?" enquired Malcolm Sage without looking up.

"Mr. Sage!" Sir Lyster was on his dignity.

"I see you don't," was Malcolm Sage's calm comment as he resumed his examination of the dummy document. Replacing it in the envelope, he returned it to the safe, closed the door, locked it, and put the key in his pocket.

"Well! what do you make of it?" cried Mr. Llewellyn John eagerly.

"We shall have to take the Postmaster-general into our confidence."

"Woldington!" cried Mr. Llewellyn John in astonishment. "Why?"

Sir Lyster looked surprised, whilst Lord Beamdale appeared almost interested.

"Because we shall probably require his help."

"How?" enquired Sir Lyster.

"Well, it's rather dangerous to tamper with His Majesty's mails without the connivance of St. Martins-le-Grand," was the dry retort.

"But——" began Mr. Llewellyn John, when suddenly he stopped short.

Malcolm Sage had walked over to where his overcoat lay, and was deliberately getting into it.

"You're not going, Mr. Sage?" Sir Lyster's granite-like control seemed momentarily to forsake him. "What do you advise us to do?"

"Get some sleep," was the quiet reply.

"But aren't you going to search for——?" He paused as Malcolm Sage turned and looked full at him.

"A search would involve the very publicity you are anxious to avoid," was the reply.

"But——" began Mr. Llewellyn John, when Malcolm Sage interrupted him.

"The only effective search would be to surround the house with police, and allow each occupant to pass through the cordon after having been stripped. The house would then have to be gone through; carpets and boards pulled up; mattresses ripped open; chairs——"

"I agree with Mr. Sage," said Sir Lyster, looking across at the Prime Minister coldly.

"Had I been a magazine detective I should have known exactly where to find the missing document," said Malcolm Sage. "As I am not"—he turned to Sir Lyster—"it will be necessary for you to leave a note for your butler telling him that you have dropped somewhere about the house the key of this safe, and instructing him to have a thorough search made for it. You might casually mention the loss at breakfast, and refer to an important document inside the safe which you must have on Monday morning. Perhaps the Prime Minister will suggest telephoning to town for a man to come down to force the safe should the key not be found."

Malcolm Sage paused. The others were gazing at him with keen interest.

"Leave the note unfolded in a conspicuous place where anyone can see it," he continued.

"I'll put it on the hall-table," said Sir Lyster.

Malcolm Sage nodded.

"It is desirable that you should all appear to be in the best of spirits." There was a fluttering at the corners of Malcolm Sage's mouth, as he lifted his eyes for a second to the almost lugubrious countenance of Lord Beamdale. "Under no circumstances refer to the robbery, even amongst yourselves. Try to forget it."

"But how will that help?" enquired Mr. Llewellyn John, whose nature rendered him singularly ill-adapted to a walking-on part.

"I will ask you, sir," said Malcolm Sage, turning to him, "to give me a letter to Mr. Woldington, asking him to do as I request. I will give him the details."

"But why is it necessary to tell him?" demanded Sir Lyster.

"That I will explain to you to-morrow. That will be Monday," explained Malcolm Sage, "earlier if possible. A few lines will do," he added, turning to Mr. Llewellyn John.

"I suppose we must," said the Prime Minister, looking from Sir Lyster to Lord Beamdale.

"I hope to call before lunch," said Malcolm Sage, "but as Mr. Le Sage from the Foreign Office. You will refuse to discuss official matters until Monday. I shall probably ask you to introduce me to everyone you can. It may happen that I shall disappear suddenly."

"But cannot you be a little less mysterious?" said Sir Lyster, with a touch of asperity in his voice.

"There is nothing mysterious," replied Malcolm Sage. "It seems quite obvious. Everything depends upon how clever the thief is." He looked up suddenly, his gaze passing from one to another of the bewildered Ministers.

"It's by no means obvious to me," cried Mr. Llewellyn John, complainingly.

"By the way, Sir Lyster, how many cars have you in the garage?" enquired Malcolm Sage. "In case we want them," he added.

"I have two, and there are"—he paused for a moment —"five others," he added; "seven in all."

"Any carriages, or dog-carts?"

"No. We have no horses."

"Bicycles?"

"A few of the servants have them," replied Sir Lyster, a little impatiently.

"The bicycles are also kept in the garage, I take it?"

"They are." This time there was no mistaking the note of irritation in Sir Lyster's voice.

"There may be several messengers from Whitehall to-morrow," said Malcolm Sage, after a pause. "Please keep them waiting until they show signs of impatience. It is important. Whatever happens here, it would be better not to acquaint the police—*whatever happens,*" he added with

emphasis. "And now, sir"—he turned to Mr. Llewellyn John—"I should like that note to the Postmaster-general."

Mr. Llewellyn John sat down reluctantly at a table and wrote a note.

"But suppose the thief hands the document to an accomplice?" said Sir Lyster presently, with something like emotion in his voice.

"That's exactly what I am supposing," was Malcolm Sage's reply and, taking the note that Mr. Llewellyn John held out to him, he placed it in his breast pocket, buttoned up his overcoat, and walked across to the window through which he had entered. With one hand upon the curtain he turned.

"If I call you may notice that I have acquired a slight foreign accent," he said, and with that he slipped behind the curtain. A moment later the sound was heard of the window being quietly opened and then shut again.

IV

When Mr. Walters descended the broad staircase of The Towers on the Sunday morning he found two things to disturb him—Sir Lyster's note on the hall-table, and the Japanese valet "lost" in the conservatory.

He read the one with attention, and rebuked the other with acrimony. Having failed to find the missing key himself, he proceeded to the housekeeper's room, and poured into the large and receptive ear of Mrs. Eames the story of his woes.

"And this a Sunday too," the housekeeper was just remarking, in a fat, comfortable voice, when Richards, the chauffeur, burst unceremoniously into the room.

"Someone's taken the pencils from all the magnetos," he shouted angrily, his face moist with heat and lubricant.

"Is that your only excuse for bursting into a lady's room without knocking?" enquired Mr. Walters, with an austere dignity he had copied directly from Sir Lyster.

"If you apply to me presently I will lend you a pencil. In the meantime——"

"But it's burglars. They've broken into the garage and taken the pencils from every magneto, every blinkin' one," he added by way of emphasis.

At the mention of the word "burglars," Mr. Walters's professional composure of feature momentarily forsook him, and his jaw dropped. Recovering himself instantly, however, he hastened out of the room, closely followed by Richards, leaving Mrs. Eames speechless, the oval cameo locket heaving up and down upon her indignant black-silk bosom. A man had sworn in her presence and had departed unrebuked.

On reaching the garage Mr. Walters gazed vaguely about him. He was entirely unversed in mechanics, and Richards persisted in pouring forth technicalities that bewildered him. The chauffeur also cursed loudly and with inspiration, until reminded that it was Sunday, when he lowered his voice, at the same time increasing the density of his language.

Mr. Walters was frankly disappointed. There was no outward sign of burglars. At length he turned interrogatingly to Richards.

"Just a-goin' to tune 'em up I was," explained Richards for the twentieth time, "when I found the bloomin' engines had gone whonky, then——"

"Found the engines had gone what?" enquired Mr. Walters.

"Whonky, dud, na-poo," explained Richards illuminatingly, whilst Mr. Walters gazed at him icily. "Then in comes Davies," he continued, nodding in the direction of a little round-faced man, with "chauffeur" written on every inch of him, "and 'e couldn't get 'is blinkin' 'arp to 'um neither. Then we starts a-lookin' round, when lo and *be*'old! what do we find? Some streamin', saturated son of sin an' whiskers 'as pinched the ruddy pencils out of the scarlet magnetos."

"The float's gone from my carburettor."

The voice came from a long, lean man who appeared

suddenly out of the shadows at the far-end of the garage.

Without a word Richards and Davies dashed each to a car. A minute later two yells announced that the floats from their carburettors also had disappeared.

Later Richards told how that morning he had found the door of the garage unfastened, although he was certain that he had locked it the night before.

This was sufficient for Mr. Walters. Fleeing from the bewildering flood of technicalities and profanity of the three chauffeurs, he made his way direct to Sir Lyster's room. Here he told his tale, and was instructed instantly to telephone to the police.

At the telephone further trouble awaited him. He could get no reply from the exchange. He tried the private wire to the Admiralty; but with no better result.

He accordingly reported the matter to Sir Lyster, who was by then with Lord Beamdale in the library. It was the Minister of War who reminded his host of Malcolm Sage's strange request that whatever happened the police were not to be communicated with.

"But Sage could not have anticipated this—this monstrous outrage," protested Sir Lyster, white with anger. He had already imperiously put aside Lord Beamdale's suggestion that the whole affair might be a joke.

"Still, better do as he said," was the rejoinder and, as later Mr. Llewellyn John concurred, Sir Lyster decided to await the arrival of Malcolm Sage before taking further steps.

One by one the guests drifted down to breakfast, went out to the garage to see for themselves, and then returned to discuss the affair over coffee and kidneys, tea and toast.

It subsequently transpired that without exception the cars had been entirely put out of commission. From each the pencil had been removed from the magneto, and the float from the carburettor. From the bicycles the pedals had been taken away, with the exception of those belonging to Miss Blair and one of the housemaids, the only two ladies' machines in the place.

"A veritable Claude Duval," someone remarked; but this brought little consolation to the owners of the wrecked cars. It was a fine day, too, which added to their sense of hardship.

As Sir Lyster left the breakfast-room he encountered Miss Blair crossing the hall. She looked very fresh and pretty, with a demure, almost childlike expression of feature. Her cheeks were flushed with health and exercise.

"Would you like me to cycle over to Odford to the police?" she enquired. "My machine is quite all right. I have just been for a spin."

"No—er—not at present, thank you, Miss Blair," said Sir Lyster, a little embarrassed at having to refuse to do the obvious thing. He passed across the hall into the library, and Miss Blair, having almost fallen over the Japanese valet, "lost" in a corridor leading to the billiard-room, went out to condole with Richards and tell him of a strange epidemic of mishaps that seemed to have descended upon the neighbourhood. She herself had passed a motor-cycle, two push-bicycles, and a Ford car, all disabled by the roadside.

All that morning the Prime Minister, Sir Lyster, and Lord Beamdale waited and wondered. Finding the strain of trying to look cheerful too much for them, they shut themselves up in the library on the plea of pressing official business; this, in spite of Sir Lyster's well-known week-end rule.

Hour after hour passed; yet not only did Malcolm Sage fail to put in an appearance, but nothing was heard or seen of the promised bogus official messengers.

At luncheon more than one guest remarked upon the distrait and absent-minded appearance of the three Ministers, and deduced from the circumstance a grave political crisis.

The afternoon dragged its leaden course. Throughout the house there was an atmosphere of unrest. Among themselves the guests complained because no action had been taken to track down the despoiler of their cars. Walters had rendered the lives of the domestic staff intolerable by

insisting upon search for the missing key being made in the most unlikely and inaccessible places, although in his own mind he was convinced that it had been stolen by the errant Japanese.

In the library sat the three Ministers, for the most part gazing either at one another or at nothing in particular. They were waiting for something to happen: none knew quite what.

Dinner passed, a dreary meal; the ladies withdrew to the drawing-room; but still the heavy atmosphere of foreboding remained. It was nearly half-past nine when Walters entered and murmured something in Sir Lyster's ear.

An eager light sprang into Mr. Llewellyn John's eyes as the First Lord rose, made his apologies, and left the room. It was only by the exercise of great self-control that the Prime Minister refrained from jumping up and bolting after them.

Two minutes later Walters again entered the dining-room, with a request that Mr. Llewellyn John and Lord Beamdale would join Sir Lyster in the library.

As Walters threw open the library-door, they found Malcolm Sage seated at the table, his fingers spread out before him, whilst Sir Lyster stood by the fireplace.

"Ask Miss Blair if she will come here to take down an important letter, Walters," said Sir Lyster.

"Well?" cried Mr. Llewellyn John, as soon as Walters had closed the door behind him. "Have you got it?"

"The document is now in a strong-room at the General Post Office," said Malcolm Sage without looking up. "I thought it would be safer there."

"Thank God!" cried Mr. Llewellyn John, collapsing into a chair.

Malcolm Sage glanced across at him and half rose.

"I'm all right, Sage," said Mr. Llewellyn John; "but coming after this awful day of anxiety, the news was almost too much for me."

"Who took it from the safe then?" enquired Sir Lyster.

"I——" he stopped short as the door opened, and Miss

Blair entered, notebook in hand, looking very dainty in a simple grey frock, relieved by a bunch of clove carnations at the waist. Closing the door behind her, she hesitated for a moment, a smile upon her moist, slightly-parted lips.

"I'm sorry to disturb you, Miss Blair," began Sir Lyster, "but Mr. Sage——" he paused.

"It was Miss Blair who removed the document from the safe," said Malcolm Sage quietly, his eyes bent upon the finger-tips of his right hand.

"Miss Blair!" cried Sir Lyster, his hand dropping from the mantelpiece to his side.

For the fraction of a second the girl stood just inside the door; then as the significance of Malcolm Sage's words dawned upon her, the smile froze upon her lips, and blood ebbed from her face, leaving it drawn and grey, and the notebook dropped from her fingers. She staggered forward a few steps, then, clutching wildly at the edge of the table, she swayed from side to side. With an obvious effort she steadied herself, her gaze fixed upon her accuser.

Slowly Malcolm Sage raised his eyes, cold, grey, inflexible, and fixed them upon the terrified girl.

The three Ministers appeared not yet to have realised the true nature of the drama being enacted before them.

"Miss Blair," said Malcolm Sage quietly, "what are your relations with Paul Cressit?"

Twice she essayed to speak, but no sound came.

"I—I—er—know him," she faltered at length.

"I wondered," said Malcolm Sage slowly.

"What does this mean, Mr. Sage?" enquired Sir Lyster.

"I will tell you," said Malcolm Sage, whilst Lord Beamdale placed a chair into which Miss Blair collapsed. "Last night whilst you were at dinner Miss Blair opened your safe with a duplicate key made from a wax impression. She abstracted a valuable document, putting in its place some sheets of blank paper." He paused.

"Go on," almost gasped Mr. Llewellyn John.

"She took the document to her room and hid it, a little

uncertain as to how she should get it to her accomplice. This morning she saw Sir Lyster's note on the hall-table, and emboldened by the thought that the theft had not been discovered, she cycled out to Odford and posted the document to Paul Cressit at his chambers in Jermyn Street." Again Malcolm Sage paused and drew from his pocket a note.

"In the envelope was enclosed this note." He handed to Mr. Llewellyn John a half sheet of paper on which was typed:

"Paul, dearest, I have done it. I will ring you up tomorrow. I shall ask for Tuesday off. You will keep your promise, dear, and save me, won't you? If you don't I shall kill myself—G."

"Miss Blair," said Sir Lyster coldly, "what have you to say?"

"N-nothing," she faltered, striving to moisten her grey lips.

"If you will tell the truth," said Malcolm Sage, "you still have a chance. If not"; he paused significantly.

She gulped noisily, striving to regain her power of speech.

"You—you promise?" She looked across at Mr. Llewellyn John.

"Whatever Mr. Sage says we endorse," he replied gravely.

"Both of us?" she repeated.

"Both," said Malcolm Sage.

"I—I love him," she moaned; then after a pause she added: "It was to save the disgrace. He promised, he swore he would if I did it."

"Swore he would do what?" said Malcolm Sage.

"Marry me."

Malcolm Sage raised his eyes to Sir Lyster, who was standing implacable and merciless.

The girl's head had fallen forward upon the table, and her shoulders were heaving convulsively.

Rising, Malcolm Sage walked across and placed his hand upon her arm.

"It will be better for everybody if you will try and control yourself," he said gently, "and above all tell us the truth."

As if surprised at the gentleness of his tone, she slowly raised her drawn face and looked at him in wonder.

"Now listen to me," continued Malcolm Sage, drawing up a chair and seating himself beside her, "and tell me if I am wrong. Whilst you were acting as Sir Lyster's secretary you met Paul Cressit at the Admiralty, and you were attracted to him."

She nodded, with a quick indrawing of her breath.

"He made violent love to you and you succumbed. Later you took him into your confidence in regard to a certain matter and he promised to marry you. He put you off from time to time by various excuses. You were almost distracted at the thought of the disgrace. He persuaded you to take a wax impression of Sir Lyster's key, on the chance of it one day being useful."

Again she nodded, whilst the three men listened as if hypnotised.

"Finally he swore that he would marry you if you would steal this document, and he showed you a special license. Am I right?"

She nodded again, and then buried her head in her arms.

"I suppose," said Malcolm Sage quietly, "he did not happen to mention that he was already married?"

"Married!" She started up, her eyes blazing. "It isn't true, oh! it isn't true," she cried.

"I'm afraid it is," said Malcolm Sage, with feeling in his voice.

With a moan of despair her head fell forward upon the table, and hard dry sobs shook her frail body.

"Miss Blair," said Malcolm Sage presently, when she had somewhat regained her self-control, "my advice to you is to write out a full confession and bring it to me at my office to-morrow morning. It is your only chance: and now you must go to your room."

He rose, assisted her to her feet, and led her to the door, which he closed behind her.

"That I think concludes the enquiry," he said, as he walked over to the fireplace and, leaning against the mantelpiece, he began to fill his pipe. "Unless," he added, turning to Mr. Llewellyn John, "you would like to see Cressit."

The Prime Minister looked across at Sir Lyster and then at Lord Beamdale. Both shook their heads.

"What we should like, Sage," said Mr. Llewellyn John, "is a little information as to what has been happening."

With great deliberation Malcolm Sage proceeded to light his pipe. When it was drawing to his entire satisfaction, he turned to Mr. Llewellyn John and, with the suspicion of a fluttering at the corners of his mouth, remarked:

"I hope you have not been inconvenienced about the telephone."

"We could get no reply from the exchange," said Sir Lyster, "and the wire to the Admiralty is out of order."

"I had to disconnect you after I left this morning," said Malcolm Sage quietly. "My chauffeur swarmed up one of the standards. Incidentally he wrecked an almost new pair of breeches."

"They'll have to go in the Naval Estimates," cried Mr. Llewellyn John, who was feeling almost jovial now the tension of the past twenty-four hours had been removed.

"From the first," proceeded Malcolm Sage, "it was obvious that this theft was planned either at the Admiralty or at the War Office."

"That is absurd!" cried Sir Lyster with heat, whilst Lord Beamdale leaned forward, his usually apathetic expression of indifference giving place to one of keen interest.

"I accepted the assurance that only three people in this house knew of the existence of the document," Malcolm Sage proceeded, as if there had been no interruption. "There was no object in any of those three persons stealing that to which they had ready access."

Lord Beamdale nodded his agreement with the reasoning.

"Therefore," continued Malcolm Sage, "the theft must have been planned by someone who knew about the document before it came here, and furthermore knew that it was to be here at a certain time. To confirm this hypothesis we have the remarkable circumstances that the blank paper substituted for the original document was, in quality and the number of sheets, identical with that of the document itself."

"Good," ejaculated Lord Beamdale, himself a keen mathematician.

Mr. Llewellyn John and Sir Lyster exchanged glances.

"It was almost, but not quite, obvious that the exchange had been effected by a woman."

"How obvious?" enquired Mr. Llewellyn John.

"'Few women pass unperfumed to the grave,'" quoted Malcolm Sage. "I think it was Craddock who said that," he added, and Mr. Llewellyn John made a mental note of the phrase.

"The handle of the safe door was corrugated, and the lacquer had worn off, leaving it rough to the touch. When I kneeled down before the safe it was not to examine the metal work, but to see if the thief had left a scent."

"A scent?" repeated Sir Lyster.

"On the handle of the door there was a distinct trace of perfume, very slight, but I have a keen sense of smell, although a great smoker. On the document itself there was also evidence of a rather expensive perfume, not unlike that used by Miss Blair. Furthermore, it was bent in a rather peculiar manner, which might have resulted from its being carried in the belt of a woman's frock. It might, of course, have been mere chance," he added; "but the envelope did not show a corresponding bend."

Again Lord Beamdale nodded appreciatively.

"Although several people have had an opportunity of taking a wax impression of the key, the most likely were Miss Blair and Walters—that, however, was a side issue."

"How?" enquired Sir Lyster.

"Because primarily we were concerned with making the criminal himself or herself divulge the secret."

"That's why you would not allow the loss to be made known," broke in Mr. Llewellyn John.

"The thief," continued Malcolm Sage, with a slight inclination of his head, "would in all probability seize the first safe opportunity of getting rid of the plunder."

"But did you not suspect the Japanese?" broke in Lord Beamdale.

"For the moment I ruled him out," said Malcolm Sage, "as I could not see how it was possible for him to know about the existence of the document in question, and furthermore, as he had been in the house less than two days, there was no time for him to get a duplicate key."

"What did you do then?" queried Sir Lyster.

"I motored back to town, broke in upon the Postmaster-general's first sleep, set on foot enquiries at the Admiralty and War Office, in the meantime arranging for The Towers to be carefully watched." Malcolm Sage paused for a moment; then as none of his hearers spoke he continued:

"I had a number of people in the neighbourhood—motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians. No one could have left the house and grounds without being seen.

"Miss Blair found the morning irresistible, and took an early spin on her bicycle to Odford, where she posted a packet in a pillar-box situated in a street that was apparently quite empty."

"And you secured it?" enquired Mr. Lewellyn John, leaning forward eagerly.

"I'm afraid I quite spoilt the local postmaster's Sunday by requesting that a pillar-box should be specially cleared, and producing an authority from the Postmaster-general. After he had telegraphed to head-quarters and received a reply confirming the letter, he reluctantly acquiesced."

"And it was addressed to this man Cressit?" enquired Sir Lyster.

"Yes. He is a temporary staff-clerk in the Plans Department. Incidentally he is something of a Don Juan, and the

cost of living has increased considerably, as you know, sir," he added, turning to the Prime Minister.

Mr. Llewellyn John smiled wanly. It was his political "cross," this cost-of-living problem.

"And what shall we do with him?" enquired Sir Lyster. "The scoundrel," he added.

"I have almost done with him as a matter of fact," said Malcolm Sage.

"Done with him?" exclaimed Lord Beamdale.

"I sent him a telegram in Miss Blair's name to be at Odford Station to-night at seven: then I kidnapped him."

"Good heavens, Sage! What do you mean?" cried Mr. Llewellyn John, with visions of the Habeas Corpus Act and possible questions in the House, which he hated.

"We managed to get him to enter my car, and then we went through him—that is a phrase from the crook-world. We found upon him the marriage certificate, and later I induced him to confess. I am now going to take him back to my office, secure his finger-prints and physical measurements, which will be of interest at Scotland Yard."

"But we are not going to prosecute," said Mr. Llewellyn John anxiously.

"Mr. Paul Cressit will have forty-eight hours in which to leave the country," said Malcolm Sage evenly. "He will not return, because Scotland Yard will see that he does not do so. There will probably be an application to you, sir," Malcolm Sage continued, turning to Mr. Llewellyn John, "to confirm what I tell them."

"Excellent!" cried Mr. Llewellyn John. "I congratulate you, Sage. You have done wonders."

"But I failed to understand your saying that you would be here this morning," said Sir Lyster, "and under an assumed name with——"

"A foreign accent," suggested Malcolm Sage. "The thief might have been an old hand at the game, and too clever to fall into a rather obvious trap. In that case I might have been forced, as a foreigner, to salute the hands of all the ladies in the house. I learnt to click my heels

years ago in Germany." Again there was a suspicious movement at the corners of Malcolm Sage's mouth.

"But——" began Sir Lyster.

"To identify the scent?" broke in Mr. Llewellyn John.

Malcolm Sage inclined his head slightly.

"The Foreign Office messengers?" queried Lord Beamdale.

"I decided that pedestrians and cyclists would do as well. I merely wanted the house watched. There were quite a number of casualties to cars and bicycles in the neighbourhood," he added dryly.

"But why did you cut us off from the telephone?" enquired Mr. Llewellyn John.

"The accomplice might have got through, and I could afford to take no risks."

'Well, you have done splendidly, Sage," said Mr. Llewellyn John heartily, "and we are all greatly obliged. By the way, there's another little problem awaiting you. Someone broke into the garage last night and wrecked all the cars and bicycles——"

"Except two," said Malcolm Sage.

"Then you've heard." Mr. Llewellyn John looked at him in surprise.

"The man who did it is in my car outside with Cressit."

"You've got him as well?" cried Mr. Llewellyn John excitedly. "Sage, you're a miracle of sagacity," he added, again mentally noting the phrase.

"The missing pencils, floats, and pedals you will find on the left-hand side of the drive about halfway down, under a laurel bush," said Malcolm Sage quietly.

"And who is this fellow who did this scandalous thing?" demanded Sir Lyster.

"My chauffeur."

"Your chauffeur!"

"I could not risk the thief having access to a fast car."

"But what if this fellow Cressit refuses to go?" enquired Lord Beamdale.

"He won't," said Malcolm Sage grimly. "D.O.R.A. is still in operation. I had to remind him of the fact."

Malcolm Sage picked up his hat and coat and walked towards the door.

"I must be going," he said. "I have still several things to attend to. You won't forget about the plunder from the garage?" he added.

"But what am I to do about Miss Blair?" asked Sir Lyster.

"That's a question I think you will find answered in the Gospel of St. Luke—the seventh chapter and I think the forty-seventh verse"; and with that he was gone, leaving three Ministers gazing at one another in dumb astonishment.

Had a cynic peeping into the library of The Towers a few minutes later, he would have discovered three Cabinet Ministers bending over a New Testament, which Sir Lyster had fetched from his wife's boudoir, and the words they read were: "Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much."

"Strange," murmured Lord Beamdale, "very strange," and the others knew that he was referring not to the text, or to the unhappy girl—but to Malcolm Sage.

"We are always surprised when we find Saul among the prophets," remarked Mr. Llewellyn John, and he made a mental note of the phrase. It might do for the "Wee Frees."

HERBERT JENKINS

THE HOLDING UP OF LADY GLANEDALE

I

"More trouble, Tommy," remarked Gladys Norman one morning as James Thompson entered her room. He looked across at her quickly, a keen flash of interest in his somnolent brown eyes.

"Somebody's pinched Lady Glanedale's jewels. Just had a telephone message. What a happy place the world would be without drink and crime——"

"And women," added Thompson, alert of eye, and prepared to dodge anything that was coming.

"Tommy, you're a beast. Get thee hence!" and, bending over her typewriter, she became absorbed in rattling words on to paper.

Thompson had just reached the third line of "I'm Sorry I Made You Cry," when his quick eye detected Malcolm Sage as he entered the outer office.

With a brief "Good morning," Malcolm Sage passed into his room, and a minute later Gladys Norman was reading from her note-book the message that had come over the telephone to the effect that early that morning a burglar had entered Lady Glanedale's bedroom at the Home Park, Hyston, the country house of Sir Roger Glanedale, and, under threat from a pistol, had demanded her jewel-case, which she had accordingly handed to him.

As the jewels were insured with the Twentieth Century Insurance Corporation, Ltd., Malcolm Sage had been immediately communicated with, that he might take up

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the enquiry with a view to tracing the missing property.

One of Malcolm Sage's first cases had been undertaken for this company in connection with a burglary. He had been successful in restoring the whole of the missing property. In consequence he had been personally thanked by the Chairman at a fully attended Board Meeting, and at the same time presented with a gold-mounted walking-stick, which, as he remarked to Sir John Dene, no one but a drum-major in full dress would dare to carry.

Having listened carefully as he read her notes, Malcolm Sage dismissed Gladys Norman with a nod and for some minutes sat at his table drawing the inevitable diagrams upon his blotting pad. Presently he rose, and walked over to a row of shelves filled with hed-backed volumes, lettered on the back "Records," with a number and a date.

Every crime or curious occurrence that came under Malcolm Sage's notice was duly chronicled in the pages of these volumes, which contained miles of press-cuttings. They were rendered additionally valuable by an elaborate system of cross-reference indexing.

After referring to an index-volume, Malcolm Sage selected one of the folios, and returned with it to his table. Rapidly turning over the pages he came to a newspaper-cutting, which was dated some five weeks previously. This he read and pondered over for some time. It ran:

DARING BURGLARY

COUNTRY MANSION ENTERED

BURGLAR'S SANG-FROID

In the early hours of yesterday morning a daring burglary was committed at the Dower House, near Hyston, the residence of Mr. Gerald Comminge, who was away from home at the time, by which the burglar was able to make a rich haul of jewels.

In the early hours of the morning Mrs. Comminge was awakened by the presence of a man in her room. As she sat up in bed, the man turned an electric torch upon her

and, pointing a revolver in her direction, warned her that if she cried out he would shoot. He then demanded to know where she kept her jewels, and Mrs. Comminge, too terrified to do anything else, indicated a drawer in which lay her jewel-case.

Taking the jewel-case and putting it under his arm, the man threatened that if she moved or called out within a quarter of an hour he would return and shoot her. He then got out of the window on to a small balcony and disappeared.

It seems that he gained admittance by clambering up some ivy and thus on to the narrow balcony that runs the length of one side of the house.

Immediately on the man's disappearance, Mrs. Comminge fainted. On coming to she gave the alarm, and the police were immediately telephoned for. Although the man's footprints are easily discernible upon the mould and the soft turf, the culprit seems to have left no other clue.

The description that Mrs. Comminge is able to give of her assailant is rather lacking in detail, owing to the shock she experienced at his sudden appearance. It would appear that the man is of medium height and slight of build. He wore a cap and a black handkerchief tied across his face just beneath his eyes, which entirely masked his features. With his very inadequate description of the ruffian the police have perforce to set to work upon the very difficult task of tracing him.

For some time Malcolm Sage pondered over the cutting, then rising he replaced the volume and rang for Thompson.

An hour later Tims was carrying him along in the direction of Sir Roger Glanedale's house at a good thirty-five miles an hour.

The Home Park was an Elizabethan mansion that had been acquired by Sir Roger Glanedale out of enormous profits made upon the sale of margarine. As Tims brought the car up before the front entrance with an impressive

sweep, the hall-door was thrown open by the butler, who habitually strove by an excessive dignity of demeanour to remove from his mental palate the humiliating flavour of margarine.

Malcolm Sage's card considerably mitigated the impression made upon Mr. Hibbs's mind by the swing with which Tims had brought the car up to the door.

Malcolm Sage was shown into the morning-room and told that her ladyship would see him in a few minutes. He was busy in the contemplation of the garden when the door opened and Lady Glanedale entered.

He bowed and then, as Lady Glandale seated herself at a small table, he took the nearest chair.

She was a little woman, some eight inches too short for the air she assumed, fair, good-looking; but with a hard, set mouth. No one had ever permitted her to forget that she had married margarine.

"You have called about the burglary?" she enquired, in a tone she might have adopted to a plumber who had come to see to a leak in the bath.

Malcolm Sage bowed.

"Perhaps you will give me the details," he said. "Kindly be as brief as possible," his "incipient Bolshevism" manifesting itself in his manner.

Lady Glanedale elevated her eyebrows; but, as Malcolm Sage's eyes were not upon her, she proceeded to tell her story.

"About one o'clock this morning I was awakened to find a man in my bedroom," she began. "He was standing between the bedstead and the farther window, his face masked. He had a pistol in one hand, which he pointed towards me, and an electric torch in the other. I sat up in bed and stared at him. 'If you call out I shall kill you,' he said. I asked him what he wanted. He replied that if I gave him my jewel-case and did not call for help, he would not do me any harm.

"Realising that I was helpless, I got out of bed, put on a wrapper, opened a small safe I have set in the wall, and handed him one of the two jewel-cases I possess.

"He then made me promise that I would not ring or call out for a quarter of an hour, and he disappeared out of the window.

"At the end of a quarter of an hour I summoned help, and my stepson, the butler, and several other servants came to my room. We telephoned for the police, and after breakfast we telephoned to the insurance company."

For fully a minute there was silence. Malcolm Sage decided that Lady Glanedale certainly possessed the faculty of telling a story with all the events in their proper sequence. He found himself with very few questions to put to her.

"Can you describe the man?" he asked as he mechanically turned over the leaves of a book on a table beside him.

"Not very well," she replied. "I saw little more than a silhouette against the window. He was of medium height, slight of build and I should say young."

"That seems to agree with the description of the man who robbed Mrs. Comminge," he said as if to himself.

"That is what the inspector said," remarked Lady Glanedale.

"His voice?"

"Was rather husky, as if he were trying to disguise it."

"Was it the voice of a man of refinement or otherwise?"

"I should describe it as middle-class," was the snobbish response.

"The mask?"

"It looked like a silk handkerchief tied across his nose. It was dark in tone; but I could get only a dim impression."

Malcolm Sage inclined his head comprehendingly.

"You know Mrs. Cumminge?"

"Intimately."

"You mentioned two jewel-cases," he said.

"The one stolen contained those I mostly wear," replied Lady Glanedale; "in the other I keep some very valuable family jewels."

"What was the value of those stolen?"

"About £8,000," she replied, "possibly more. I should explain, perhaps, that Sir Roger was staying in town last night, and so far I have not been able to get him on the telephone. He was to have stayed at the Ritzton; but apparently he found them full and went elsewhere."

"You have no supicion as to who it was that entered your room?"

"None whatever," said Lady Glanedale.

"The police have already been?" he enquired, as he examined with great intentness a rose he had taken from a bowl beside him.

"Yes, they came shortly after we telephoned. They gave instructions that nothing was to be touched in the room, and no one was to go near the ground beneath the windows."

Malcolm Sage nodded approvingly, and returned the rose to the bowl.

"And now," he said, "I think I should like to see the room. By the way, I take it that you keep your safe locked?"

"Always," said Lady Glanedale.

"Where do you keep the key?"

"In the bottom right-hand drawer of my dressing-table, under a pile of handkerchiefs."

"As soon as you can I should like to see a list of the jewels," said Malcolm Sage, as he followed Lady Glanedale towards the door.

"My maid is copying it out now," she replied, and led the way up the staircase, along a heavily-carpeted corridor, at the end of which she threw open a door giving access to a bedroom.

Malcolm Sage entered and gave a swift look about him, seeming to note and catalogue every detail. It was a large room, with two windows looking out on to a lawn. On the right was a door, which, Lady Glanedale explained, led to Sir Roger's dressing-room.

He walked over to the window near the dressing-room and looked out.

"That is the window he must have entered by; he went out that way," explained Lady Glanedale.

"You spoke of a stepson," said Malcolm Sage. "He is a man, I presume?"

"He is twenty-three." Lady Glanedale elevated her eyebrows as if surprised at the question.

"Can you send for him?"

"Certainly, if you wish it." She rang the bell, and a moment later requested the maid who answered it to ask Mr. Robert to come immediately.

"Do you sleep with lowered blinds?" enquired Malcolm Sage.

"The one nearest my bed I always keep down; the other I pull up after putting out my light."

"Did you awaken suddenly, or gradually—as if it were your usual time to awaken?"

"It was gradual," said Lady Glanedale, after a pause for thought. "I remember having the feeling that someone was looking at me."

"Was the light from the torch shining on your face?"

"No, it was turned to the opposite side of the room, on my right as I lay in bed."

At that moment a young man in tweeds entered.

"You want me, Mater?" he enquired; then, looking across at Malcolm Sage with a slightly troubled shadow in his eyes, he bowed.

"This is Mr. Sage from the insurance company," said Lady Glanedale coldly. "He wishes to see you."

Again there was the slightly troubled look in young Glanedale's eyes.

"Perhaps you will place Mr. Glanedale in the exact position in which the man was standing when you first saw him," said Malcolm Sage.

Without a word Lady Glanedale walked over to the spot she had indicated, young Glanedale following. When she had got him into the desired position she turned interrogatingly to Malcolm Sage.

"Now," he said, "will you be so kind as to lie on your bed in the same position in which you were when you awakened."

For a moment Lady Glanedale's eyebrows indicated surprise. She used her eyebrows more than any other fea-

ture for the purpose of expressing emotion. Without comment, however, she lay down upon the bed on her right side, closed her eyes, then a moment later sat up and gazed in the direction where Glanedale stood looking awkward and self-conscious.

"Perhaps you will repeat every movement you made," said Malcolm Sage. "Try to open the safe door exactly as you did then, and leave it at the same angle. Every detail is important."

Lady Glanedale rose, picked up a wrapper that was lying over a chair-back, put it on and, walking over to the safe, turned the key that was in the lock, and opened it. Then, standing between the safe and Glanedale, she took out a jewel-case and closed the door. Finally she walked over to where her stepson stood, and handed him the jewel-case.

"Thank you," said Malcolm Sage. "I wanted to see whether or not the man had the opportunity of seeing into the safe."

"I took care to stand in front of it," she said.

"So I observed. You allowed the quarter of an hour to elapse before you raised the alarm?"

"Certainly, I had promised," was the response.

"But a promise extorted by threats of violence is not binding," he suggested as he pulled meditatively at his right ear.

"It is with me," was the cold retort.

He inclined his head slightly.

"I notice that the ground beneath the windows has been roped off."

"The inspector thought it had better be done, as there were footprints."

"I will not trouble you further for the present, Lady Glanedale," said Malcolm Sage, moving towards the door. "I should like to spend a little time in the grounds. Later I may require to interrogate the servants."

Young Glanedale opened the door and his stepmother, followed by Malcolm Sage, passed out. They descended the stairs together.

"Please don't trouble to come out," said Malcolm Sage. "I shall probably be some little time," this as Lady Glanedale moved towards the hall door. "By the way," he said, as she turned towards the morning-room where she had received him, "did you happen to notice if the man was wearing boots, or was he in stockinged feet?"

"I think he wore boots," she said, after a momentary pause.

"Thank you," and Malcolm Sage turned towards the door, which was held open by the butler.

Passing down the steps and to the left, he walked round to the side of the house, where the space immediately beneath Lady Glanedale's windows had been roped off.

Stepping over the protecting rope, he examined the ground beneath the window through which the burglar had entered.

Running along the side of the house was a flower-bed some two feet six inches wide, and on its surface was clearly indicated a series of footprints. On the side of the painted water-pipe were scratches such as might have been made by someone climbing up to the window above.

Drawing a spring metal-rule from his pocket, he proceeded to take a series of measurements, which he jotted down in a note book.

He next examined the water-pipe up which the man presumably had climbed, and presently passed on to a similar pipe farther to the left. Every inch of ground he subjected to a careful and elaborate examination, lifting the lower branches of some evergreens and gazing beneath them.

Finally, closing his notebook with a snap, Malcolm Sage seated himself upon a garden-seat and, carefully filling and lighting his pipe, he became absorbed in the polished pinkness of the third fingernail of his left hand.

A quarter of an hour later he was joined by young Glanedale.

"Found anything?" he enquired.

"There are some footprints," said Malcolm Sage, look-

ing at him keenly. "By the way, what did you do when you heard of the robbery?"

"I went to the Mater's room."

"And after that?"

"I rushed downstairs and started looking about."

"You didn't happen to come anywhere near this spot, or walk upon the mould there?" He nodded at the place he had just been examining.

"No; as a matter of fact, I avoided it. The Mater warned me to be careful."

Malcolm Sage nodded his head.

"Did the butler join you in your search?" he enquired.

"About five minutes later he did. He had to go back and put on some things; he was rather sketchy when he turned up in the Mater's room," Glanedale grinned at the recollection.

"And you?" Malcolm Sage flashed on him that steel grey look of interrogation. For a moment the young man seemed embarrassed, and he hesitated before replying.

"As a matter of fact, I hadn't turned in," he said at length.

"I see," said Malcolm Sage, and there was something in his tone that caused Glanedale to look at him quickly.

"It was such a rippin' night that I sat at my bedroom window smoking," he explained a little nervously.

"Which is your bedroom window?"

Glanedale nodded in the direction of the farther end of the house.

"That's the governor's dressing-room," he said, indicating the window on the left of that through which the burglar had escaped, "and the next is mine."

"Did you see anything?" enquired Malcolm Sage, who, having unscrewed the mouthpiece of his pipe, proceeded to clean it with a blade of grass.

Again there was the slightest suggestion of hesitation before Glanedale replied.

"No, nothing. You see," he added hastily, "I was not looking out of the window, merely sitting at it. As a matter of fact, I was facing the other way."

"You heard no noise?"

Glanedale shook his head.

"So that the first intimation you had of anything being wrong was what?" he asked.

"I heard the Mater at her door calling for assistance, and I went immediately."

Malcolm Sage turned and regarded the water-pipe speculatively.

"I wonder if anyone really could climb up that," he said. "I'm sure I couldn't."

"Nothing easier," said Glanedale. "I could shin up in two ticks," and he made a movement towards the pipe.

"No," said Malcolm Sage, putting a detaining hand upon his arm. "If you want to demonstrate your agility, try the other. There are marks on this I want to preserve."

"Right-o," cried Glanedale with a laugh, and a moment later he was shinning up the further pipe with the agility of a South Sea islander after cocanuts.

Malcolm Sage walked towards the pipe, glanced at it, and then at the footprints beneath.

"You were quite right," he remarked casually. Then a moment later he enquired:

"Do you usually sit up late?"

"We're not exactly early birds," Glanedale replied a little irrelevantly. "The Mater plays a lot of bridge, you know," he added.

"And that keeps you out of bed?"

"Yes and no," was the reply. "I can't afford to play with the Mater's crowd; but I have to hang about until after they've gone. The governor hates it. You see," he added confidentially, "when a man's had to make his money, he knows the value of it."

"True," said Malcolm Sage, but from the look in his eyes his thoughts seemed elsewhere.

"By the way, what time was it that you had a shower here last night?"

"A shower?" repeated Glanedale. "Oh! yes, I remember, it was just about twelve o'clock; it only lasted about ten minutes."

"I'll think things over," said Malcolm Sage, and Glanedale, taking the hint, strolled off towards the house.

Malcolm Sage walked over to where an old man was trimming a hedge.

"Could you lend me a trowel for half an hour?" he enquired.

"No, dang it, I can't," growled the old fellow. "I ain't a-going to lend no more trowels or anything else."

"Why?" enquired Malcolm Sage.

"There's my best trowel gone out of the tool-house," he grumbled, "and I ain't a-going to lend no others."

"How did it go?"

"How should I know?" he complained. "Walked out, I supposed, same as trowels is always doin'."

"When did you miss it?"

"It was there day 'fore yesterday I'll swear, and I ain't a-going to lend no more."

"Do you think the man who took the jewels stole it?" enquired Malcolm Sage.

"Dang the jools," he retorted, "I want my trowel," and, grumbling to himself, the old fellow shuffled off to the other end of the hedge.

Half an hour later Malcolm Sage was in Hyston, interviewing the inspector of police, who was incoherent with excitement. He learned that Scotland Yard was sending down a man that afternoon, furthermore that elaborate enquiries were being made in the neighbourhood as to any suspicious characters having recently been seen.

Malcolm Sage asked a number of questions, to which he received more or less impatient replies. The inspector was convinced that the robbery was the work of the same man who had got away with Mrs. Comminge's jewels, and he was impatient with anyone who did not share this view.

From the police station Malcolm Sage went to The Painted Flag, where, having ordered lunch, he got through to the Twentieth Century Insurance Corporation, and made an appointment to meet one of the assessors at Home Park at three o'clock.

II

Mr. Grimwood, of the firm of Grimwood, Galton & Davy, insurance assessors, looked up from the list in his hand. He was a shrewd little man, with side-whiskers, pince-nez that would never sit straight upon his aquiline nose, and an impressive cough.

He glanced from Malcolm Sage to young Glanedale, then back again to Malcolm Sage; finally he coughed.

The three men were seated in Sir Roger Glanedale's library awaiting the coming of Lady Glanedale.

"And yet Mr. Glanedale heard nothing," remarked Mr. Grimwood musingly. "Strange, very strange."

"Are you in the habit of sitting smoking at your bedroom window?" enquired Malcolm Sage of Glanedale, his eyes averted.

"Er—no, not exactly," was the hesitating response.

"Can you remember when last you did such a thing?" was the next question.

"I'm afraid I can't," said Glanedale, with an uneasy laugh.

"Perhaps you had seen something that puzzled you," continued Malcolm Sage, his restless fingers tracing an imaginary design upon the polished surface of the table before him.

Glanedale was silent. He fingered his moustache with a nervous hand. Mr. Grimwood looked across at Malcolm Sage curiously.

"And you were watching in the hope of seeing something more," continued Malcolm Sage.

"I——" began Glanedale, starting violently, then he stopped.

"Don't you think you had better tell us exactly what it was you saw?" said Malcolm Sage, raising a pair of gold-rimmed eyes that mercilessly beat down the uneasy gaze of the young man.

"I—I didn't say I saw anything."

"It is for you to decide, Mr. Glanedale," said Malcolm Sage, with an almost imperceptible shrug of his shoulders,

"whether it is better to tell your story now, or under cross-examination in the witness-box. There you will be under oath, and the proceedings will be public."

At that moment Lady Glanedale entered, and the three men rose.

"I am sorry to interrupt you," she said coldly, "but Sir Roger has just telephoned and wishes to speak to Mr. Glanedale."

"I fear we shall have to keep Sir Roger waiting," said Malcolm Sage, walking over to the door and closing it.

Lady Glanedale looked at him in surprise.

"I do not understand," she began.

"You will immediately," said Malcolm Sage quietly. "We were just discussing the robbery." He slightly stressed the word "robbery."

"Really——" began Lady Glanedale.

"Mr. Glanedale was sitting at his window smoking," continued Malcolm Sage evenly. "He cannot remember ever having done such a thing before. I suggested that something unusual had attracted his attention, and that he was waiting to see what would follow. I was just about to tell him what had attracted his attention when you entered, Lady Glanedale."

Glanedale looked across at his step-mother and then at Malcolm Sage. His misery was obvious.

"Last night, soon after twelve," continued Malcolm Sage, "Mr. Glanedale happened to look out of his window and was surprised to see a figure moving along towards the left. It was not the figure of a man with a handkerchief tied across his face as a mask; but a woman. He watched. He saw it pause beneath the second window of your bedroom, Lady Glanedale, not the one by which the burglar entered. Then it stooped down."

Malcolm Sage's fingers seemed to be tracing each movement of the mysterious figure upon the surface of the table. Lady Glanedale gazed at his long, shapely hands as if hypnotised.

"Presently," he continued, "it returned to the first window where it was occupied for some minutes. Mr. Glane-

dale could not see this; but the figure was engaged in making footprints and marking the sides of the water-pipe with a shoe or boot as high up as it could reach. It——"

"How dare you make such an accusation!" cried Lady Glanedale, making an effort to rise; but she sank back again in her chair, her face plaster-white.

"I have made no accusation," said Malcolm Sage quietly. "I am telling what Mr. Glanedale saw."

A hunted look sprang to Lady Glanedale's eyes. She tore her eyes from those magnetic fingers and gazed about her wildly as if meditating flight. Her throat seemed as if made of leather.

"Would you be prepared to deny all this in the witness-box under oath, Mr. Glanedale?" enquired Malcolm Sage.

Glanedale looked at him with unseeing eyes, then across at his step-mother.

"The woman had put on a pair of men's boots that the footprints might be masculine. They were so much too large for her that she had to drag her feet along the ground. The boots were those of a man weighing, say, about eleven and a half stone; the weight inside those boots shown by the impression in the mould was little more than seven stone."

Lady Glanedale put out her hand as if to ward off a blow; but Malcolm Sage continued mercilessly, addressing Glanedale.

"The length of a man's stride is thirty inches; between these steps the space was less than fifteen inches. Skirts are worn very narrow."

He paused, then, as Lady Glanedale made no reply, he turned to Glanedale.

"I asked you this morning," he said, "to climb the other pipe for the double purpose of examining the impress of your boots on the mould as you left the ground and when you dropped back again on to the mould. Also to see what sort of marks a pair of leather boots would make upon the weather-worn paint of the pipe.

"As you sprang from the ground and clutched the pipe, there was a deep impress on the mould of the soles of

both boots, deep at the toes and tapering off towards the heel. On your return you made distinct heel-marks as well."

Lady Glanedale had buried her face in her hands. She must blot out the sight of those terrible hands! Glanedale sat with his eyes upon Malcolm Sage as if hypnotised.

"There was a shower of rain last night about twelve, an hour before the alleged burglar arrived; yet the footprints were made before the rain fell. In two cases leaves had been trodden into the footprints; yet on these leaves were drops of rain just as they had fallen."

The hands seemed to draw the leaves and indicate the spots of water as if they had been blood. Glanedale shuddered involuntarily.

"In the centre-part of the pipe there were no marks, although there were light scratches for as high up as the arm of a short person could reach, and as far down from the bedroom window as a similar arm could stretch. These scratches were quite dissimilar from those made on the other pipe."

Lady Glanedale moaned something unintelligible.

"Although there had been a shower and the mould was wet," proceeded Malcolm Sage, "there were no marks of mud or mould on the pipe, on the window-sill, or in Lady Glanedale's bedroom, which, I understand, had purposely not been swept. A man had slid down that water-pipe; yet he had done so without so much as removing the surface dust from the paint.

"He had reached the ground as lightly as a fairy, without making any mark upon the mould; the footprints were merely those of someone approaching and walking from the pipe."

Glanedale drew a cigarette case from his pocket; opened it, took out a cigarette, then, hesitating a moment, replaced it, and returned the case to his pocket, his eyes all the time on Malcolm Sage.

"I think," continued Malcolm Sage, "we shall find that the burglar has buried the jewel-case a few yards to the right of the pipe he is supposed to have climbed." His

forefinger touched a spot on the extreme right of the table. "There are indications that the mould has been disturbed. Incidentally a trowel is missing——"

Glanedale suddenly sprang to his feet, just as Lady Glanedale fell forward in her chair—she had fainted.

III

"It's a very unpleasant business," remarked Mr. Goodge, the General Manager of the Twentieth Century Insurance Company, as he looked up from reading a paper that Malcolm Sage had just handed to him. In it Lady Glanedale confessed the fraud she had sought to practise upon the Corporation. "A very unpleasant business," he repeated.

Malcolm Sage gazed down at his finger-nails, as if the matter had no further interest for him. When his brain was inactive, his hands were at rest.

"I don't know what view the Board will take," continued Mr. Goodge, as Malcolm Sage made no comment.

"They will probably present me with another walking-stick," he remarked indifferently.

Mr. Goodge laughed. Malcolm Sage's walking-stick had been a standing joke between them.

"What made you first suspect Lady Glanedale?" he enquired.

"She had omitted to rehearse the episode of the burglary, and consequently when it came to reconstructing the incident, she failed in a very important particular." Malcolm Sage paused.

"What was that?" enquired Mr. Goodge with interest, as he pushed a box of cigars towards Malcolm Sage, who, however, shaking his head, proceeded to fill his pipe.

"She had already told me that the key of the safe was always kept beneath a pile of handkerchiefs in one of the drawers of her dressing-table; yet when I asked her to go through exactly the same movements and actions as when the burglar entered her room, she rose direct

from the bed and went to the safe. The dressing-table was at the other end of the room, and to get to it she would have had to pass the spot where she said the man was standing."

Mr. Goodge nodded his head appreciatively.

"The next point was that I discovered it was Lady Glanedale who suggested to the police inspector that means should be taken to prevent anyone approaching the water-pipe by which the man was supposed to have climbed. She was anxious that the footprints should be preserved.

"Another point was that young Glanedale happened to remark that his step-mother was much addicted to bridge, and that the stakes were too high to admit of his joining in. Also that men who have themselves accumulated their wealth know the value of money. Sir Roger disliked bridge and probably kept his lady short."

"Most likely," agreed Mr. Goodge. "He has the reputation of being a bit shrewd in money matters. When did you begin to suspect Lady Glanedale?"

"From the first," was the reply. "Everything rang false. Lady Glanedale's story suggested that it had been rehearsed until she had it by heart," continued Malcolm Sage. "It was too straightforward, too clearly expressed for the story of a woman who had just lost eight thousand pounds' worth of jewels. When I put questions to her she hesitated before replying, as if mentally comparing her intended answer with what she had already told.

"Then she was so practical in preparing a list of the lost jewels at once, and in warning her stepson not to go near the spot beneath her window, as there might be footprints; this at a time when she was supposed to be in a state of great excitement."

"Did you suspect young Glanedale at all?" queried Mr. Grimwood.

"No," said Malcolm Sage, "but to make quite sure I cast doubt upon the possibility of anyone climbing the pipe. If he had been concerned he would not have volunteered to prove I was wrong."

"True," said Mr. Goodge as he examined critically the glowing end of his cigar. "Lady Glanedale seems to have done the job very clumsily, now that you have explained everything."

"Even the professional criminal frequently underrates the intelligence of those whose business it is to frustrate him; but Lady Glanedale's efforts in marking the water-pipe would not have deceived a child. A powerful magnifying-glass will show that on all such exterior pipes there is an accumulation of dust, which would be removed from a large portion of the surface by anyone climbing either up or down. Lady Glanedale had thought marks made by a boot or a shoe would be sufficient confirmation of her story. She is rather a stupid woman," he added, as he rose to go.

"I suppose she got the idea from the Comminge affair?"

"Undoubtedly," was the response; "but as I say, she is a stupid woman. Vanity in crime is fatal; it leads the criminal to underrate the intelligence of others. Lady Glanedale is intensely vain."

"The Board will probably want to thank you personally," said Mr. Goodge as he shook hands; "but I'll try and prevent them from giving you another walking-stick," he laughed as he opened the door.

HERBERT JENKINS

THE MISSING HEAVYWEIGHT

I

"Mr. Doulton, sir. Very important." Rogers had carefully assimilated his master's theory of the economy of words, sometimes even to the point of obscuring his meaning.

Taking the last piece of toast from the rack, Malcolm Sage with great deliberation proceeded to butter it. Then, with a nod to the waiting Rogers, he poured out the last cup of coffee the pot contained.

A moment later the door opened to admit a clean-shaven little man of about fifty, prosperous in build and appearance; but obviously labouring under some great excitement. His breath came in short, spasmodic gasps. His thin sandy hair had clearly not been brushed since the day before, whilst his chin and upper lip bore obvious traces of a night's growth of beard. He seemed on the point of collapse.

"He's gone—disappeared!" he burst out, as Rogers closed the door behind him. Malcolm Sage rose, motioned his caller to a chair at the table, and resumed his own seat.

"Had breakfast?" he enquired quietly, resuming his occupation of getting the toast carefully and artistically buttered.

"Good God, man!" exploded Mr. Doulton, almost hysterically. "Don't you understand? Burns has disappeared!"

"I gathered as much," said Malcolm Sage calmly, as he reached for the marmalade.

"Pond telephoned from Stainton," continued Mr. Doul-

(From "Malcolm Sage, Detective," by Herbert Jenkins. Copyright, 1921, by George H. Doran Company, New York, and Herbert Jenkins, Ltd., London.)

ton. "I was in bed. I got dressed, and came round here at once. I——" he stopped suddenly, as Rogers entered with a fresh relay of coffee. Without a word he proceeded to pour out a cup for Mr. Doulton, who, after a moment's hesitation, drank it greedily.

Rogers glanced interrogatingly from the dish that had contained eggs and bacon to Malcolm Sage, who nodded.

When he had withdrawn, Mr. Doulton opened his mouth to speak, then closed it again and gazed at Malcolm Sage, who, having superimposed upon the butter a delicate amber film of marmalade, proceeded to cut up the toast into a series of triangles. Apparently it was the only thing in life that interested him.

For weeks past the British and American sporting world had thought and talked of nothing but the forthcoming fight between Charley Burns and Bob Jefferson for the heavyweight championship of the world. The event was due to take place two days hence at the Olympia for a purse of £40,000 offered by Mr. Montague Doulton, the prince of impresarios.

Never had a contest been looked forward to with greater eagerness than the Burns *v.* Jefferson match. A great change had come over public opinion in regard to prize-fighting, thanks to the elevating influence of Mr. Doulton. It was no longer referred to as "brutalising" and "debasing." Refined and nice-minded people found themselves mildly interested and patriotically hopeful that Charley Burns, the British champion, would win. In two years Mr. Doulton had achieved what the National Sporting Club had failed to do in a quarter of a century.

Long and patiently he had laboured to bring about this match, which many thought would prove the keystone to the arch of Burns's fame, incidentally to that of the impresario himself.

"And now he's disappeared—clean gone." Mr. Doulton almost sobbed.

"Tell me."

Malcolm Sage looked up from his plate, the last triangle of toast poised between finger and thumb.

In short staccatoed sentences, like bursts from a machine-gun, Mr. Doulton proceeded to tell his story.

That morning at six o'clock, when Alf Pond, Burns's trainer, had entered his room to warn him that it was time to get up, he found it unoccupied. At first he thought that Burns had gone down before him; but immediately his eye fell on the bed, and he saw that it had not been slept in, he became alarmed.

Going to the bedroom door, he had shouted to the sparring-partners, and soon the champion's room was filled with men in various stages of déshabillé.

Only for a moment, however, had they remained inactive. At Alf Pond's word of command they had spread helter-skelter over the house and grounds, causing the early morning air to echo with their shouts for "Charley."

When at length he became assured that Burns had disappeared, Alf Pond telephoned first to Mr. Doulton and then to Mr. Papwith, Burns's backer.

"I told Pond to do nothing and tell no one," said Mr. Doulton, in conclusion, "and when I left my rooms my man was trying to get through to Papwith to ask him to keep the story to himself."

Malcolm Sage nodded approval.

"Now, what's to be done?" He looked at Malcolm Sage with the air of a man who has just told a doctor of his alarming symptoms, and almost breathlessly awaits the verdict.

"Breakfast, a shave, then we'll motor down to Stainton," and Malcolm Sage proceeded to fill his briar, his whole attention absorbed in the operation.

A moment later Rogers entered with a fresh supply of eggs and bacon. Mr. Doulton shook his head. Instinctively his hand had gone up to his unshaven chin. It was probably the first time in his life that he had sat at table without shaving. He prided himself upon his personal appearance. In his younger days he had been known as "Dandy Doulton."

"The car in half an hour, Rogers," said Malcolm Sage, as he rose from the table. "When you've finished," he

said, turning to Mr. Doulton, "Rogers will give you hot water, a razor and anything else you want. By the time you have shaved I shall be ready."

"But don't you see—— Think what it——" began Mr. Doulton.

"An empty stomach neither sees nor thinks," was Malcolm Sage's oracular retort, and he went over to the window and seated himself at his writing-table.

For the next half-hour he was engaged with his correspondence, and in telephoning instructions to his office.

By the time Mr. Doulton had breakfasted and shaved, the car was at the door.

During the run to Stainton both men were silent. Mr. Doulton was speculating as to what would happen at the Olympia on the following night if Burns failed to appear, whilst Malcolm Sage was occupied with thoughts, the object of which was to prevent such a catastrophe.

"They're sure to say it's a yellow streak," Mr. Doulton burst out on one occasion; but, as Malcolm Sage took no notice of the remark, he subsided into silence, and the car hummed its way along the Portsmouth Road.

Burns's training-quarters were situated at Stainton, near Guildford. Here, under the vigilant eye of Alf Pond, and with the help of a large retinue of sparring-partners, he was getting himself into what had come to be called "Burns's condition," which meant that he would enter the ring trained to the minute. Never did athlete work more conscientiously than Charley Burns.

As the car turned into a side road, flanked on either hand by elms, Mr. Doulton tapped on the wind-screen, and Tims pulled up. Malcolm Sage had requested that the car be stopped a hundred yards before it reached "The Grove," where the training quarters were situated.

"Wait for me here," he said, as he got out.

"It's the first gate on the right," said Mr. Doulton.

Walking slowly away from the car, Malcolm Sage examined with great care the road itself. Presently he stopped and, taking from his pocket a steel spring-measure, he proceeded to measure a portion of the surface

of the dusty roadway. Having made several entries in a note-book, he then turned back to the car, his eyes still on the road.

Instructing Tims to remain where he was, Malcolm Sage motioned to Mr. Doulton to get out.

"This way," said Malcolm Sage, leading him to the extreme left-hand side of the road. Turning into the gates of "The Grove," they walked up the drive towards the house. In front stood a group of men in various and non-descript costumes.

As Malcolm Sage and Mr. Doulton approached, a man in a soiled white sweater and voluminous grey flannel trousers, generously turned up at the extremities, detached himself from the group and came towards them. He was puffy of face, with pouched eyes and a moist skin; yet in his day Alf Pond had been an unbeatable middle-weight, and the greatest master of ring-craft of his time; but that was nearly a generation ago.

In agonised silence he looked from Mr. Doulton to Malcolm Sage, then back again to Mr. Doulton. There was in his eyes the misery of despair.

The preliminary greetings over, Alf Pond led the way round to a large coach-house in the rear, which had been fitted up as a gymnasium. Here were to be seen all the appliances necessary to the training of a boxer for a great contest, including a roped ring at one end.

"He was here only yesterday." There was a world of tragedy and pathos in Alf Pond's tone. Something like a groan burst from the sparring-partners.

With a quick, comprehensive glance, Malcolm Sage seemed to take in every detail.

"It's a bad business, Pond," said Mr. Doulton, who found the mute despair of these hard-living, hard-hitting men rather embarrassing.

"What'd I better do?" queried Alf Pond.

"I've put the whole matter in Mr. Sage's hands," said Mr. Doulton. "He'll find him, if anyone can."

A score of eyes were turned speculatively upon Malcolm Sage. In none was there the least ray of hope. All

had now made up their minds that Jefferson would win the fight by default.

Slowly and methodically Malcolm Sage drew the story of Burns's disappearance from Alf Pond, the sparring-partners occasionally acting as a chorus.

When all had been told, Malcolm Sage gazed for some moments at the finger-nails of his left hand.

"You were confident he would win?" he asked at length.

"Confident!" There was incredulity and wonder in Alf Pond's voice. Then, with a sudden inspiration, "Look at Kid!" he cried—"look at him!" and he indicated with a nod a fair-haired giant standing on his right.

Malcolm Sage looked.

The man's face showed the stress and strain of battle. His nose had taken on something of the quality of cubism, his right eye was out of commission, and there was an ugly purple patch on his left cheek, and his right ear looked as if a wasp had stung it.

"He did that in one round, and him the third. Kid asked for it, and he got it, same as Jeff would," explained Alf Pond proudly, a momentary note of elation in his voice. There was also something of pride in the grin with which Kid stood the scrutiny of the others.

"Do you know of any reason why Burns should have left his room?" Malcolm Sage looked from one to the other interrogatingly.

"There wasn't any," was Alf Pond's response, and the others nodded their concurrence.

"He knew no one in the neighbourhood?"

"No one to speak of. A few local gents would drop in occasional to see how he was getting on, and then a lot o' newspaper chaps came down from London." There was that in Alf Pond's tone which seemed to suggest that in his opinion such questions were foolish.

"Did he receive any letters or telegrams yesterday?" was the next question.

"Letters!" Alf Pond laughed sardonically. "Shoals of 'em. He'd turn 'em all over to Sandy Lane," indicating a red-headed man on the right.

"He wasn't much at writing letters," said Sandy Lane, by way of explanation.

"His hands were made for better things," cried Alf Pond scornfully, and the sparring-partners nodded their agreement.

"Did he turn over to you the *whole* of his correspondence?" asked Malcolm Sage, turning to Sandy Lane.

"Sometimes he'd keep a letter," broke in Alf Pond, "but not often. Sort of personal," he added, as if to explain the circumstance.

"From a woman, perhaps?" suggested Malcolm Sage, taking off his hat and stroking the back of his head.

"Woman!" cried Alf Pond scornfully; "Charley hadn't no use for women, or he wouldn't have been the boxer he was."

"He was quite himself, quite natural, yesterday?" asked Malcolm Sage.

"Quite himself," repeated Alf Pond deliberately; then, once more indicating Kid, he added, "Look at Kid; that's what he done in one round." There was in his tone all the contempt of knowledge for ignorance.

Malcolm Sage resumed his hat and, taking his pipe from his pocket, proceeded to stuff it with tobacco, as if that were the only problem in the world. On everything he did he seemed to concentrate his entire attention to the exclusion of all else.

"No smokin' here, if *you* please," said Alf Pond sharply.

Malcolm Sage returned his pipe to his pocket without comment.

"Now, what are you going to do?" There was challenge in Alf Pond's voice as he eyed Malcolm Sage with disfavour. In his world men with bald, conical heads and gold-rimmed spectacles did not count for much.

"How many people know of the disappearance?" enquired Malcolm Sage, ignoring the question.

"Outside of us here, only Mr. Papwith," was the response.

For fully a minute Malcolm Sage did not reply. At length he turned to Mr. Doulton.

"Can you arrange to remain here to meet Mr. Papwith?" he enquired.

"I propose doing so," was the reply.

"You want to find Burns, I suppose?" Malcolm Sage asked of Alf Pond, in low, level tones.

Alf Pond and his colleagues eyed him as if he had asked a most astonishing question.

"You barmy?" demanded the trainer, putting into words the looks of the others.

"You will continue with the day's work, as if nothing had happened," continued Malcolm Sage. "No one outside must know that——"

"But how are we going to do that with Charley gone?" broke in Alf Pond, taking a step forward with clenched fists.

"Your friend here," indicating Kid, "can pose as Burns," was Malcolm Sage's quiet reply, as he looked into the trainer's eye without the flicker of an eyelash

"You, Mr. Doulton, I will ask to remain here with Mr. Papwith until I communicate with you. On no account leave the training-quarters, even if you have to wait here until to-morrow evening."

"But——" began Alf Pond; then he stopped and gazed at the sparring-partners, blinking his eyes in stupid bewilderment.

"Have I your promise?" enquired Malcolm Sage of Mr. Doulton.

"As far as I am concerned, yes," was the response, "and I think I can answer for Papwith. It's very inconvenient, though."

"Not so inconvenient as having to explain things at the Olympia to-morrow night," remarked Malcolm Sage drily. "Now," he continued, turning once more to Alf Pond, "I suppose you've all got something on this fight."

"Something on it!" cried Alf Pond: then, turning to the sparring-partners, he cried, "He asks if we've got somethink on it!" He groaned, "We got our shirts on it. That's what we got on it, our shirts," and his voice broke in something like a sob.

"You had better post someone at the gate to tell all enquirers that Burns is doing well and is confident of winning," said Malcolm Sage to Mr. Doulton, "and keep an eye on the telephone. Tell anyone who rings up the same; in fact"—and he turned to the others—"as far as you are concerned, Burns is still with you. Do you understand?"

They looked at one another in a way that was little suggestive of understanding.

"Did Burns wear the same clothes throughout the day?" asked Malcolm Sage of the trainer.

"Course he didn't!" Alf Pond made no effort to disguise the contempt he felt. "In the daytime he used to wear flannel trousers an' a sweater, same as me, except when he was sparrin', then he put on drawers. Always would have everythink same as it was goin' to be, would Charley—seconds, referee, timekeeper. Said it made him feel at home when the time came. Quaint he was in some of his ideas."

"Then from the time he got up until bedtime he wore the same clothes?" queried Malcolm Sage, without looking up from the inevitable contemplation of his finger-nails.

"No he didn't." Alf Pond spat his boredom at these useless questions into a far corner. "He was always a bit of a nib, was Charley. After he'd finished the day's work he'd put on a suit o' dark duds, a white collar, a watch on his wrist, an' all that bunko. Then we'd play poker or billiards till half-past eight, when we'd all turn in." The look with which Alf Pond concluded this itinerary plainly demanded if there were any more silly questions coming.

"Now I should like to see Burns's room."

Malcolm Sage and Mr. Doulton followed Alf Pond upstairs to a large room on the first floor, as destitute of the attributes of comfort as a guard-room. A bed, a washhand stand, and a chest of drawers comprised the furniture. A few articles of clothing were strewn about, and in one corner lay a pair of dumb-bells.

The windows were open top and bottom. Malcolm Sage

passed from one to the other and looked out. He examined carefully each of the window-ledges.

"Are these the clothes he wore when he got up?" he enquired, indicating a sweater and a pair of flannel trousers that lay on a chair.

Alf Pond nodded.

Swiftly Malcolm Sage felt in the pockets. There was nothing there. A minute later he left the room, followed by the others. Descending the stairs, he passed along the hall and out on to the short drive, accompanied by Mr. Doulton and Alf Pond.

Half-way towards the gate Malcolm Sage stopped.

"You will hear from me some time to-day or to-morrow," he said. "Do exactly as I have said and, if I don't telephone before to-morrow evening, go to the Olympia as if Burns were to be there. You might have sent out to my car a pair of drawers and boots in case I find him."

"You're going to find him then?" Alf Pond suddenly gripped Malcolm Sage's arm with what was almost ferocity.

Malcolm Sage shrugged his shoulders.

"If you do as I tell you, it will help. By the way," he added, "if you have time, you might put twenty-five pounds on Burns for me. Mr. Doulton will be responsible for the amount. Now I want to look about me," and with that Malcolm Sage walked a few steps down the drive, leaving two men staring after him as if he had either solved or propounded the riddle of the universe.

For some minutes he stood in the centre of the drive, looking about him. Stepping to the right, he glanced back at the house, and then towards the road. Finally he made for a large clump of rhododendrons that lay between the road and the house.

Motioning the others to remain where they were on the gravelled drive, he walked to a clear space of short grass between the rhododendrons and the hedge bordering the road.

Going down upon his knees, he proceeded to examine

the ground with great care and attention. For nearly half an hour he crawled from place to place, absorbed in grass, shrub, and flower-bed. Finally he penetrated half into the privet-hedge that bordered the road.

The sparring-partners had now joined the other two on the drive, and the group stood watching the strange movements of the man who, in their opinion, had already shown obvious symptoms of insanity.

Presently Malcolm Sage emerged from the hedge, in his hand a long cigar, round the centre of which was a red-and-gold band. For fully a minute he stood examining this with great care. Then, taking a letter-case from his pocket, he carefully placed the cigar in the hinge, returned the case to his pocket, and rejoined the group of wide-eyed spectators.

"Found anythink?" enquired Alf Pond eagerly.

"Several things," replied Malcolm Sage.

"What?" The men grouped themselves round him, breathless with interest.

"By the way," said Malcolm Sage, turning to Alf Pond, "does Burns happen to smoke long Havana cigars with a red——"

"Smoke!" yelled Alf Pond in horror. "Him smoke! You blinkin' well barmy?" he demanded, looking Malcolm Sage up and down as if meditating an attack upon him. "I'd like to see the man who'd so much as dare to strike a match here," and he glared about him angrily, whilst the sparring-partners shuffled their feet and murmured among themselves. There was just the suspicion of a fluttering at the corners of Malcolm's Sage's mouth.

"I'm afraid Pond is rather excited just at present," said Mr. Doulton tactfully. By now he had entirely regained his own composure. "Burns is a great lover of tobacco, and Pond takes no risks. You were saying that you had discovered several things?"

Again the group of men drew closer to Malcolm Sage, their heads thrust forward as if fearful of missing a word.

"For one thing, Burns left his room last night to meet a woman by——"

"It's a lie!" cried Alf Pond heatedly. "It's a lie! I don't believe it."

"A rather dainty creature, small and well dressed. She was accompanied by several men, one of them rather stout, very careful of his clothes, and an inveterate smoker. The others were bigger, rougher men. They all came in a car, which arrived after the motor bicycle, which in turn arrived later than the small car."

The sparring-partners exchanged glances, whilst Alf Pond stared.

"Subsequently they drove off in a very great hurry. Incidentally they took Burns with them; but against his will. On the way down the girl was in the tonneau; but on the return journey she sat beside the driver. As Burns was in the tonneau, it was no doubt a precaution."

"I don't believe a word," interrupted Alf Pond. "He's makin' it all up."

Without appearing to notice the remark, Malcolm Sage turned and walked towards the gate, Mr. Doulton following a step in the rear.

"Liar!" growled Alf Pond, as he turned towards the house. "Ruddy liar!" he added, as if finding consolation in the term. *"He'll* never find old Charley."

"Tell me, Sage, were you serious?" asked Mr. Doulton, as they reached the gate.

"Entirely."

"I'm afraid poor Pond thought you were making game of us," he added apologetically. "Do you mind explaining how you arrived at your conclusions?"

"Behind that clump of rhododendrons," began Malcolm Sage, "there is written a whole history. The marks of boots, or shoes, with very high heels suggests a woman, the size and daintiness of the footwear tell the rest. As Burns appeared, she stepped towards him. Her very short steps indicate both fashionable clothes and smallness of stature."

"And the man who was careful about his clothes?"

"He stood behind a holly-bush with an umbrella——"

"But how did you know?"

"He had been leaning upon it, and there was the mark where it had sunk into the soft turf up to the point where the silk joins the stick. A man who carries an umbrella on a kidnapping adventure must be habitually in fear of rain—none but a well-dressed man would fear rain.

"Then, as he had a cigar in his hand with the end bitten off, it shows the habitual smoker. He was only waiting for the end of the drama before lighting up. His height I get from his stride, and his size by the fact that, like Dumpty-Dumpty, he had a great fall. I'll tell you the rest later. I'm afraid it's an ugly business."

"But the girl riding beside the driver?" burst out Mr. Doulton, bewildered by the facts that Malcolm Sage had deduced from so little.

"At the edge of a side-road there is invariably a deposit of dust, and the marks where they all got out and in are clearly visible. The hurry of departure is shown by the fact that the car started before one of the men had taken his place, and his footsteps running beside it before jumping on to the running-board are quite clear. I'll ring you up later. I cannot stay now." And with that he hurried away.

"Back along your own tracks, Tims," said he on reaching the car. He then walked on to the main road.

With head over right shoulder, Tims carefully backed the car, Malcolm Sage signalling that he was to turn to the right.

Instructing Tims to drive slowly, Malcolm Sage took his seat beside him, keeping his eyes fixed upon the offside of the road. He stopped the car at each cross-road, and walked down it some twenty or thirty yards, his eyes bent downwards as if in search of something. At the end of half an hour he instructed Tims to drive back to London at his best speed.

II

That afternoon in his office Malcolm Sage worked without cessation. Both telephones, incoming and outgoing,

were continually in use. Telegraph girls and messenger boys came and went.

Gladys Norman had ceased to worry about the shininess of her nose, and William Johnson was in process of re-adjusting his ideas as to lack of the dramatic element at the Malcolm Sage Bureau as compared with detective fiction and the films.

About three o'clock a tall, clean-shaven man was shown into Malcolm Sage's room. He had a hard mouth, keen, alert eyes, and an air suggestive of the fact that he knew the worst there was to be known about men and acted accordingly.

With a nod Malcolm Sage motioned him to a seat. Six months before he had saved Dick Lindler from the dock by discovering the real criminal in whose stead Lindler was about to be charged with a series of frauds. Since then Malcolm Sage had always been sure of such "inside" information in the bookmaking world as he required.

"How's the betting now?" enquired Malcolm Sage.

"Nine to two on Jefferson offered; and no takers," was the reply. "There's something up, Mr. Sage; I'll take my dying oath on it," he said, leaning across the table and dropping his voice.

"Any big amounts?" enquired Malcolm Sage.

"No, that's what troubles me. The money's being spread about so. The funny thing is that a lot of it is being put on by letter. I've had a dozen myself to-day."

Malcolm Sage nodded slowly as he filled his pipe, which with great deliberation he proceeded to light until the whole surface of the tobacco glowed. Then, as if suddenly realising that Lindler was not smoking, he pulled open a drawer, drew out a cigar-box, and pushed it across, watching him closely from beneath his eyebrows as he did so.

Lindler opened the box, then looked interrogatingly at Malcolm Sage.

"Didn't know you smoked the same poison-sticks as the 'downy One,'" he said, picking up a long cigar with a red and gold band, and examining it.

"Who's he?"

"Old Nathan Goldschmidt, the Jew."

"I'm sorry," said Malcolm Sage; "that should not have been there. Try one of the others."

Lindler looked across at him curiously.

"Personally, myself," he said, "I believe he's at the bottom of all this heavy backing of Jefferson."

Malcolm Sage continued to smoke as if the matter did not interest him, whilst Lindler bit off the end of the cigar he had selected and proceeded to light it.

"Several of his crowd have been around this morning trying to load me up," he continued presently, when the cigar was drawing to his satisfaction. "Must have stayed up all night to be in time," he added scathingly.

"Have you seen Goldschmidt himself?"

"Not since yesterday afternoon."

"Does he usually carry an umbrella?"

Lindler laughed.

"The boys call him 'Gampy Goldschmidt,' " he said.

"You really think that the Goldschmidt gang is backing Jefferson?"

"They've been at it for the last week," was the response. "They *know* something, Mr. Sage. Somebody's going to do the dirty, otherwise they wouldn't be so blasted clever about it."

"Clever?"

"Putting on all they can on the Q.T.," was the response.

"Find out all you can about Goldschmidt and his friends. Keep in touch with me here if you learn anything. Incidentally, keep on the water-wagon until after the fight."

"Right-o!" said Lindler, rising; "but I wish you'd tell me——"

"I have told you," said Malcolm Sage, and with that he took the proffered hand and, a moment later, Dick Lindler passed through the outer door. As he did so, he almost collidid with Thompson, who had just jumped out of Malcolm Sage's car and was dashing towards the door. Thompson rushed across the outer-office, through the

glass-panelled door, and passed swiftly into Malcolm Sage's room.

"It's the car right enough, Chief," he said, making an effort to control his excitement. "I picked it up outside Jimmy Dilk's. There were three men in it."

Malcolm Sage nodded, then, opening a drawer, produced a sealed packet.

"If I'm not back here by half-past four," he said, "ring up Inspector Wensdale, and ask him to come round at once with a couple of men and wait in the outer office. Give him this packet. There's a letter inside. If he's not there, get anyone else you know."

Thompson stared. In spite of long association with Malcolm Sage, there were still times when he failed to follow his chief's line of reasoning.

"If I telephone or write cancelling these instructions, ignore anything I say. Do you understand?"

"I understand, Chief," said Thompson.

Malcolm Sage picked up his hat and stick and left the room.

Tims, who had been waiting at the outer door, sprang to his seat and, almost before the door of the car had closed, it jerked forward and was soon threading its sinuous way towards Coventry Street.

Five minutes later Malcolm Sage pressed a bell-push on the fifth floor of a large block of flats known as Coventry Mansions. The door was opened by a heavily-built, ill-favoured man. In response to Malcolm Sage's request to see Mr. Goldschmidt, he was told that he couldn't.

"Tell him," said Malcolm Sage, fixing his steel-grey eyes upon the man in a steady gaze, "that Mr. Malcolm Sage wishes to see him about something that happened last night, and about something more that is to happen tomorrow night. He'll understand."

A sudden look of apprehension in the man's eyes seemed to suggest that he at least understood. He hesitated for a moment, then, with a gruff "Wait there," shut the door in Malcolm's Sage's face. Three minutes later he opened it again and, inviting him to enter, led the way along a

passage, at the end of which was a door, which the man threw open.

Malcolm Sage found himself in a darkened room, from which the light was excluded by heavy curtains. For a moment he looked about him, unable to distinguish any object. When his eyes became accustomed to the gloom, he saw seated in an arm-chair a man with a handkerchief held to his face.

"Mr. Goldschmidt?" he interrogated, as he seated himself in the center of the room.

"Well, what is it?" was the thickly spoken retort.

"I came to ask your views on the fight to-morrow night, and to enquire if you think the odds of nine to two on Jefferson are justified."

There was an exclamation from the arm-chair.

"If you've got anything to say," said the thick voice angrily, "get it off your chest and—clear out!" he added, as an afterthought. "What do you want?" the voice demanded, as Malcolm Sage remained silent.

"I want you to take a little run with me in my car," said Malcolm Sage evenly. "Fresh air will do your nose good."

"What the——" the man broke off, apparently choked with passion, then, recovering himself, added, "Here, cough it up, or else I'll have you thrown out into the street! What is it?"

"I want either you, or one of your friends, to come with me to where Charley Burns has been taken."

There was a stifled exclamation from the chair, then a howl of agony as the hand holding the handkerchief dropped. At the same moment three men burst into the room. Malcolm Sage's back was to the door. He did not even turn to look at them.

Somebody switched on the light, and Malcolm Sage saw before him the puffy face of a man of about sixty, in the centre of which was a hideous purple splotch that had once been a nose. A moment later the handkerchief obscured the unsavoury sight.

"What's all this trouble about?" shouted one of the

men, advancing into the room, the others remaining by the door.

Slowly Malcolm Sage turned and regarded the three men, whose appearance proclaimed their pugilistic calling.

"I was just asking Mr. Goldschmidt to be so good as to accompany me to where Charley Burns is——"

He was interrupted by exclamations from all three men.

"What in blazes do you mean?" demanded he who had spoken, a dark, ill-favoured fellow with a brow like a rainy sky.

"I will tell you," said Malcolm Sage. "Last night Mr. Goldschmidt, accompanied by certain friends, went to Burns's training-quarters to keep an appointment made in the name of a girl friend of Burns. He came out quite unsuspectingly, was overpowered, and subsequently taken in Mr. Goldschmidt's car to a place with which I am unacquainted, so that he shall not appear at the Olympia tomorrow night."

He drew his pipe from his pocket and proceeded to fill it. His air was that of a chess player who knows that he can mate his opponent in two moves.

"It's a lie!" roared one of the men, whilst Goldschmidt shrieked something that was unintelligible.

"You drove out by way of Putney Hill, Esher, and Clandon Cross Roads. You backed the car to within two hundred yards of 'The Grove,' where you all got out with the exception of the driver. You then entered 'The Grove,' taking cover behind a large clump of rhododendrons."

"And that's a lie!" choked Goldschmidt.

"By the way," continued Malcolm Sage, "your fair friend drove out in the tonneau; but returned seated beside the driver, and one of you was nearly left behind and entered the car after it had started."

The men looked at one another in bewilderment.

"You, Goldschmidt, carried an umbrella," continued Malcolm Sage. "and took cover behind the holly bush; but you came out a little too soon, hence that nose. Burns was playing 'possum. You were rather anxious for a smoke too. I am a smoker myself."

A stream of profanity burst from Goldschmidt's lips.

"You see I am in a position to prove my points," said Malcolm Sage calmly.

"Oh! you are, are you?" sneered the spokesman, as he moved a little closer to Malcolm Sage, "and I am in the position to prove that we're four to one."

"Three to one," corrected Malcolm Sage quietly. "Your friend," indicating Goldschmidt, with a nod, "is scarcely——"

He was interrupted by a stifled oath from the arm-chair.

"Good old Nigger!" murmured one of the men by the door.

"Well, and what about it?" demanded Nigger.

"If Burns is delivered over to me within two hours, unharmed and in fighting trim, and a cheque for £1,000 is paid to St. Timothy's Hospital by noon to-morrow, there will be no prosecution, and I will not divulge your names. If not, during the next twenty-four hours, London will probably have its first experience of lynch-law."

With that Malcolm Sage struck a match and proceeded to light his pipe.

"That all?" sneered the man. "Ain't there nothing else you'd like?"

"I cannot recall anything else at the moment," said Malcolm Sage imperturbably, as he looked across at the fellow over the top of the burning match.

"You dirty nark," burst out the man by the door, who had hitherto remained silent. "A pretty sort of stool-pigeon you are."

"Spyin' on us, wasn't you?" demanded Nigger, edging nearer to Malcolm Sage.

"It's ten minutes past four," remarked Malcolm Sage coolly, as he glanced at his wrist-watch.

"Oh, it is, is it?" was the retort, "and in another hour it'll be ten minutes past five."

"I have to be back at my office by half-past four." Malcolm Sage looked about for some receptacle in which to throw the spent match.

"You don't say so." Again Nigger edged a little nearer; but Malcolm Sage appeared not to notice it.

"Well, I may as well tell you that you don't leave here until eleven o'clock to-morrow night, see?"

There were murmurs of approval from the others.

"Then, perhaps, you will send out and buy me a toothbrush," was Malcolm Sage's quiet rejoinder.

III

Never had the Olympia seen such a crowd as was gathered to watch the fight between Charley Burns of England and Joe Jefferson of America. Never in its career of hybrid ugliness had it witnessed such excitement.

For thirty-six hours the wildest rumours had been current. Charley Burns had broken down, run away, committed suicide, and refused to fight. He had broken a leg, an arm, a finger, and had torn more tendons than he possessed. He had sprained ankles, wrung withers, been overtrained, had contracted every known disease in addition to manifesting a yellow streak.

The atmosphere was electrical. The spectators whispered among themselves, exchanging views and rumours. The most fantastical stories were related, credited, and debated with gravity and concern.

If some ill-advised optimist ventured to question a particularly lugubrious statement, he was challenged to explain the betting, which had crept up to six to one on Jefferson offered, with no takers.

The arrival of the Prince of Wales gave a welcome vent for pent-up excitement. Accustomed as he was to enthusiastic acclamation, the Prince seemed a little embarrassed by the warmth and intensity of his greeting.

The preliminary bouts ran their course, of interest only to those immediately concerned, who were more truly alone in the midst of that vast concourse than some anchorite in the desert of Sahara.

The heat was unbearable, the atmosphere suffocating.

Men smoked their cigars and cigarettes jerkily, now indulging in a series of staccatoed puffs, now ignoring them until they went out.

Slowly the time crept on as by the bedside of death. If those ridiculously bobbing figures in the ring would only cease their caperings!

"Break! Break!" The voice of the referee suddenly split through a "pocket" of silence. Everyone seemed startled, then the curtain of sound once more descended and wrapped the assembly in its impenetrable folds. The gong sounded the beginning and the end of each round, and so it went on.

Mr. Papwith sat in the front row near the Prince. Smiling, smiling, for ever smiling. He was a dapper little man, with a fiery, clean-shaven face, and a fringe of grizzled hair above his ears that gave the lie to the auburn silkiness with which his head was crowned. Next to him was Mr. Doulton, who chatted and smiled, smiled and chatted; but his eyes moved restlessly over the basin of faces, as if in search of an answer to some unuttered question.

At length the preliminary bouts were ended. As the combatants had arrived unheralded, so they departed unsung. Although no one appeared to be watching, a sudden hush fell over the assembly. The dramatic moment had arrived. A few minutes would see the rumours confirmed or disproved. Men, seasoned spectators of a hundred fights, found the tension almost unbearable.

The M.C. climbed through the ropes and looked fussily about him. He appealed to the spectators for silence during the actual rounds and for the discontinuance of smoking. A black cardboard box, sealed as if it contained duelling-pistols instead of gloves, was thrust into the ring. Men took a last fond draw at their cigars and cigarettes before mechanically extinguishing them.

All eyes were directed towards the spot where the combatants would appear.

The referee turned expectantly in the same direction. A group of men in flannels and sweaters was seen moving towards the ring. Among them was a sleek, dark-haired

man in a long dressing-gown of bottle green. It was Joe Jefferson.

Suddenly a great roar burst out, echoing and re-echoing continuously as the group approached the ring and Jefferson climbed through the ropes.

Then came another hush. A second group of men was observed approaching the ring. There was a shout as those nearest recognised Alf Pond among them. It developed into a roar, then died away as if strangled, giving place to a hum of suppressed inquiry. Everyone was either asking, or looking, the same question.

"Where is Burns?"

Alf Pond and his associates moved to the ringside as if bound for a funeral.

Their gloom seemed suddenly to pervade the whole vast concourse. Men talked to one another mechanically, their eyes fixed upon the group.

There was a strange hush. The men reached the ringside and stood looking at one another. The audience looked at them. What had happened?

None seemed to notice three men moving down the opposite gangway towards the ring. The man in the centre was muffled in a heavy overcoat that reached to his heels, a soft felt hat was pulled down over his eyes. One or two spectators in their immediate neighbourhood gave them a hasty, curious glance.

Suddenly Alf Pond gave a wild whoop and, breaking away from his fellows, dashed towards the three strangers. In a moment the overcoat and muffler were thrown aside and the hat knocked off, revealing the fair-haired and smiling Charley Burns.

Gripping Burns's hand, Alf Pond broke down. Tears streamed down his battle-seared features, and he sobbed with the choking agony of a strong man.

Then suddenly everything became enveloped in a dense volume of sound. Men and women stood on their chairs and waved frantically, madly, anything they could clutch hold of to wave. The whole Olympia appeared to have gone mad. Noble peers, grave judges, sedate generals and

austere philosophers acted as if suddenly bereft of the restraining influences of civilisation and decorum.

Hugged and fondled by his seconds, Burns reached the ring and climbed into it. The black cardboard box was opened, the men's hands bandaged, the gloves donned. Still the pandemonium raged, now dying down, now bursting out again with increased volume.

Jefferson and Burns shook hands. The referee stood in the middle of the ring and, with arms extended aloft, appeared to be imploring the blessing of heaven. The crowd, however, understood, and the great uproar died down to a hum of sound.

Then for the first time it was noticed that, in place of the habitual smile that had made Burns the idol he was, there was a grim set about his jaw that caused those nearest to the ring to wonder and to speculate.

Charley Burns's "battle-smile" had become almost a tradition.

"If he'd only fight more and box less," Alf Pond would say complainingly, "he'd beat the whole blinkin' world with one hand."

Suddenly a hush fell upon the assembly, a hush as pronounced as had been the previous pandemonium. The referee took a final look round. Behind Burns, Alf Pond could be seen sponging his face over a small bucket. He was once more himself. There were things to be done.

Almost before anyone realised it the gong sounded; the fight had begun.

"Look!"

A shout broke involuntarily from Alf Pond, as he dropped the sponge and gazed before him with wide-staring eyes.

"He's fighting!" he cried, almost dancing with excitement. "Did ever you see the like, Sandy?" But Sandy's eyes were glued upon the ring. His hands and feet moved convulsively—he was a fighter himself.

Discarding his traditional opening of boxing with swift defensive watchfulness, Charley Burns had darted at his man. Before anyone knew what was happening his left

crashed between Jefferson's eyes, a blow that caused him to reel back almost to the ropes.

Before he could recover, a right hook had sent him staggering against the ropes themselves. For a second it looked as if he would collapse over them. Pulling himself together, however, he strove to clinch; but Burns was too quick for him. Stepping back swiftly, he feinted with his left, and Jefferson, expecting a repetition of the first blow, raised his guard. A white right arm shot out to the mark, and Jefferson went down with a crash.

The timekeeper's voice began to drone the monotonous count; at eight Jefferson gathered himself together; at nine he was on his feet.

Once more Burns was upon him, and Jefferson saved himself by clinching. It was clear that he was badly shaken.

Three times during the first round Burns floored his man. The onlookers were mad with excitement.

Back in his own corner, Charley Burns was sitting, a hard set look in his eyes, his jaw square and firm.

Alf Pond fussed about him like a hen over a chick.

"Shut up, Alf! I know what I'm doing," said Burns sharply.

"He knows what he's doing," repeated Alf Pond ecstatically. "Hear that, Sandy? He knows what he's doing, and so does Jeff, I'll lay a pony to a pink pill," he added.

Once more the gong sounded; once more Burns sprang up and darted at his man. Jefferson tried first to dodge and then to clinch; but without avail. He was unnerved. His strategy and tactics had been planned in view of Burns's usual methods; but here was an entirely different man to deal with—a great fighter.

Twice more Jefferson went down, taking a count of nine on each occasion. He seemed to share with the spectators the knowledge that there would be no third round.

On rising the second time he seemed determined to change his tactics. He rushed forward, fighting gamely, apparently in the hope of getting a lucky knock-out blow. Without giving an inch, Burns threw off the blows and,

feinting with his left, crashed his right full on the point of his opponent's jaw.

Jefferson's hands fell, and for a second he stood gazing stupidly before him; then his knees sagged and, with a deliberation that seemed almost intolerable, he crashed forward on his face, one arm outstretched as if in protest.

Again the timekeeper's voice was heard monotonously counting. Burns turned to his corner without waiting for the conclusion of the count. He knew the strength behind that blow.

IV

Later that night, just as Big Ben was taking breath preparatory to his supreme effort, Malcolm Sage was seated in his big arm-chair smoking a final pipe before bed, and turning over in his mind the happenings of the day and the probable events of the morrow.

His train of thought was suddenly interrupted by a hammering at the outer door of his chambers, followed by the sound of loud and hilarious voices as Rogers answered the summons.

A moment later the door of the sitting-room burst open, and there flowed into the room Charley Burns and his entourage, all obviously in the best of spirits. In the background stood Rogers, with expressionless face, looking towards his master.

Malcolm Sage rose and shook hands with Burns, Mr. Doulton and Mr. Papwith, Alf Pond and his assistants.

"Sorry, Mr. Sage," cried Burns, with a laugh; "but the boys wouldn't wait, although I told them calling time was four till six," and he laughed again, the laugh of a man who has not a care in the world. He also gripped Malcolm Sage's hand with a heartiness that made him wince. The others in turn shook hands in a way that caused Malcolm Sage to wonder why America had not long since ceased to be a Republic.

The men dropped into chairs in various parts of the room, and Rogers, who had disappeared at a signal from

Malcolm Sage, now returned with a tray of glasses, syphons, and decanters. Soon the whole company was drinking the health of Malcolm Sage with an earnestness which convinced him that on the morrow there would be trouble with Colonel Sappinger, who lived above and cherished Carlyle's hatred of sound.

"And now, Mr. Sage," said Alf Pond, "we want to know how you found Charley. He won't tell us anythink. Wonderful, I call it," he added, and there was a murmur of assent from the others, as they proceeded to light the cigars that Rogers handed round.

"It was not very difficult," said Malcolm Sage, stuffing tobacco into his pipe from a terra-cotta jar beside him. As he applied a light to the bowl the others exchanged glances.

"From the first," he continued, "it was obvious that some message, or letter, had been conveyed to our friend Burns." He gazed across at the champion, who looked uncomfortable.

"As he had not mentioned the fact to any of his friends," continued Malcolm Sage, a little slyly, "it seemed obvious to assume that there was a lady in the case."

Alf Pond looked reproachfully at Burns, who reddened beneath the united gaze of seven pairs of eyes.

"That the appointment had been for the evening," proceeded Malcolm Sage, "was obvious from the fact that Burns disappeared in the blue suit he always changed into after the day's work."

Alf Pond looked across at Mr. Doulton, nodding his approval of the reasoning.

"It was Kitty, or I thought it was," burst out Burns. "She said something terrible had happened and that she must see me," he added.

Kitty Graham was shortly to become Mrs. Charley Burns, but during the period of training she had been rigorously excluded from all intercourse with her fiancé by order of the autocratic Alf Pond.

"The meeting was arranged for the further side of the large clump of rhododendrons, which acted as a

screen," continued Malcolm Sage. "When Burns arrived there, he saw a girl standing a little distance away. Before he could reach her, however, he was seized and a chloroformed pad held over his mouth. The suddenness of the attack dazed him; he did not struggle, but held his breath; he——"

"How the blazes did you know that, Mr. Sage?" burst out Burns.

"You are always a quick-thinker in the ring," said Malcolm Sage, "and you were a quick-thinker then. You smelt chloroform, held your breath and thought. It was a sort of instinctive ring-craft."

"But you——" began Burns.

"There were no marks of a struggle where you were seized. You probably realised that your only chance lay in letting the enemy think you were losing consciousness."

Burns nodded.

"Seeing that there was no sign of trouble," continued Malcolm Sage, "the principal in this little affair stepped out from where he had been taking cover just at the moment when Burns broke loose and let out. Movement has always a primary attraction for the eye, and Burns got this man full on the nose and ruined it. He also sent him clean into the privet-hedge, where he collapsed."

"Who was it?" demanded Alf Pond fiercely.

"There were, however, too many of them for Burns," continued Malcolm Sage, ignoring the question. "They had planned the attack very carefully, each clinging to a limb. Soon they had him unconscious and bound in the car. Then they turned their attention to their leader."

"Yes; but how did you find Burns?" asked Mr. Doulton eagerly.

"I didn't," said Malcolm Sage. "They showed me where he was."

"But——" began Mr. Papwith, whose shiny clean-shaven face, normally suggestive of a Turner sunset, now looked like a conflagration.

"After half an hour's fruitless effort to track the car down side-roads, I returned to London as fast as my man

could take me," proceeded Malcolm Sage, "and I immediately set enquiries on foot as to the betting on the Stock Exchange, at Tattersall's, the National Sporting Club, and other places. By three o'clock that afternoon I knew pretty well who it was that had been laying heavily against Burns. That simplified matters."

Alf Pond and Burns exchanged admiring glances.

"As you know, for more than a week previously the betting had made it clear that heavy sums were being laid on Jefferson. In the course of ten days it had veered round from 5 to 4 on Burns to 9 to 2 against. As there were no rumours detrimental to his condition or state of health, this could only mean that a lot of money was being put on Jefferson. I found out the names of the principal layers and the amounts. I discovered that all were extremely active with the exception of one. That I decided was the man with the umbrella."

"Who's he?" demanded Sandy, whose mouth had not ceased to gape since Malcolm Sage began his story.

"The man Burns knocked out. He had been leaning rather heavily on the handle whilst taking cover behind a holly-bush, and the metal cap at base of the silk was clearly marked on the ground. He was also holding an unlit cigar in his hand, which he left in the hedge. By great good chance this was recognised by someone I happen to know as a brand smoked by a certain backer of Jefferson."

"Wonderful!" broke in Alf Pond, with intense earnestness.

"So you see, I had quite a lot to help me. I was searching for a well-dressed man——"

"But how did you know he was well-dressed?" queried Mr. Doulton.

"His footprints showed that he wore boots of a fashionable model," explained Malcolm Sage. "He also carried an umbrella, even on an occasion such as this.

"I had to look for a well-dressed man who always carried an umbrella, and who smoked large and expensive

cigars and, most important of all, whose nose had been smashed out of all recognition."

"But how could you tell I got him on the nose?" demanded Burns, leaning forward eagerly.

"There was quite a pool of blood beneath the hedge," explained Malcolm Sage. "He was probably there for some minutes while his friends were making sure of you, Burns. Blood would not have flowed so generously as a result of a blow from the fist except from the nose."

"You're a knock-out, that's what you are, Mr. Sage," said Alf Pond, with admiring conviction. "*I'd* never have thought of it all," he added, with the air of one desiring to be absolutely fair.

"Finally," continued Malcolm Sage, "there was the car. It was a large car, a defect in one of the tyres enabled me to determine that by a steel rule. It was obviously heavily laden and the near back-wheel was out of track. This fact, of course, was of no help on the high-road, where other cars would blot out the track; but if I could show that someone who had been heavily backing Jefferson had a nose badly damaged, and a car with a near back-wheel out of track in just the same way that this particular wheel was out of track, and that its tyres were the same as those of the car that drew up outside Burns's training-quarters, then I should have a wealth of circumstantial evidence that it would be almost impossible to confute.

"From a friend at Scotland Yard I obtained the number of the car belonging to the man whom this evidence involved.

"As Stainton is off the Portsmouth Road, I telephoned to the Automobile Association patrols at Putney Hill, Esher, and Clandon Cross Roads. I was told that on the previous evening this particular car was seen going in the direction of Guildford. These patrols take the numbers of all cars that pass. As it had not passed Liss, where the next patrol is stationed, it was another link in the chain."

"Well, I'm blowed!" The exclamation broke involuntarily from Kid.

"As the patrols go off duty at dusk, I could get no

further help from them," continued Malcolm Sage. "I sent a man to watch Jefferson's training-quarters, although I was fairly certain that he and his party were in no way involved."

Malcolm Sage went on to narrate his call upon Nathan Goldschmidt, carefully omitting any mention of the name or address. His hearers listened with breathless interest.

"I concluded that they had taken their prisoner to some lonely, empty house," he explained, "but there was not time to search all the empty houses in the home counties, so the man with the damaged nose had to come with me in my car, and his friends followed in his."

"But how did you manage it?" gasped Mr. Papwith.

"At first they showed fight," said Malcolm Sage, "and threatened to keep me prisoner until after the fight."

"Gee!" exclaimed Kid.

"I anticipated some such move, and had instructed my people that unless I were back by half-past four, they were to deliver certain packets to the editors of well-known London papers. In these packets was told the story as far as I had been able to trace it. This I informed them."

"What did they say to that?" asked Mr. Doulton.

"They insisted that I telephone countermanding my orders; but as I explained that I had told my man Thompson he was to disregard any telephone message, or written instructions, he might receive from me, they realised that the game was up. I also informed them that Inspector Wensdale and two of his men were waiting at my office in anticipation of a possible hold-up."

"Well, I'm blessed," exclaimed Alf Pond. "If you ain't It."

"I pointed out," continued Malcolm Sage, "that whereas by producing Burns they would have a fight for their money, if the truth became known not only would their bets most likely be forfeited, but they would probably have to go to law to recover their stake-money. I further pledged Mr. Doulton, Mr. Papwith, and Burns not to take any legal action. I rather suspect that in this I was technically conspiring to defeat the ends of justice."

"But weren't you afraid they'd do a double-cross?" asked Burns.

"They heard me instruct one of my assistants that unless I were back by nine o'clock that evening, the notes I had written and addressed were to be delivered. *Incidentally the inspector was present, unofficially of course.*"

"You oughter been in the ring with a head like that," said Alf Pond sorrowfully.

"We found Burns fairly comfortable in the wine-cellar of an empty house near Ripley. They had left him food and water and beer. In all probability on awakening tomorrow morning, had we not found him, he would have discovered the door unlocked and himself no longer a prisoner." Malcolm Sage paused with the air of one who has told his story.

"But why did you keep Papwith and me at Stainton until late this afternoon?" enquired Mr. Doulton.

"In the first instance, to be in charge and to see that Burns's disappearance was kept secret. It was obvious that every endeavour would be made to put a lot of money on Jefferson before the fact became known. This would lead to rumour, and later to enquiry. Subsequently I decided that you were both better out of London, as you would have been interviewed and bound to give something away, in spite of the utmost caution."

"And now, Mr. Sage," said Mr. Doulton, "who are the scoundrels?"

"I have promised not to give their names," was the quiet reply.

"Not give their names?" cried several of his hearers in unison.

Malcolm Sage then proceeded to explain that unless the gang had seen a loop-hole of escape they would not have thrown up the sponge. Had exposure been inevitable in any case, they would have brazened it out, knowing that, whatever happened to themselves, Burns could not appear at the Olympia. The knowledge that their identity would not be divulged tempted them to risk the loss of their money. Apart from this," he added, "the details I was

able to give seemed to convince them that they had either been watched or given away.

"You must remember that they have lost enormous sums of money," Malcolm Sage went on, "and there will be another £1,000 for St. Timothy's Hospital. It was further understood that, if I could discover anyone of them had inspired a covering bet, I was released from my promise. This is why the odds got to six to one. Incidentally they ensured the defeat of their man. When Burns entered the ring to-night, it was to fight, not to box."

"That's true," said Alf Pond, nodding his head and reaching for another cigar. "He never fought like it before in all his puff."

"And where were you last night?" enquired Mr. Papwith of Burns.

"In my bed," said Malcolm Sage, "and my friend Inspector Wensdale of Scotland Yard and I slept here. Burns has never been out of Wensdale's sight until we handed him over this evening."

"I've been having police protection," laughed Burns.

"Still, you didn't oughter have gone two days without doing anythink," said Alf Pond.

"Oh! I had a bit of sparring with Mr. Sage," said Burns, "in spite of the glasses. If you want to see some pretty foot-work, Alf, you get him to put the gloves on."

"I knew it," cried Alf Pond, with conviction; then, turning to the others, "Didn't I say he oughter been in the ring?"

And Malcolm Sage found relief from the admiring eyes of his guests in gazing down at the well-bitten mouthpiece of his briar.

"But why did you let me think that Jefferson and his crowd were in it?" enquired Burns, with corrugated brow.

"Well," said Malcolm Sage slowly, "as I had put twenty-five pounds on you to steady Pond's nerves, I didn't want to lose it."

And Alf Pond winked gleefully across at Mr. Doulton.

HARVEY O'HIGGINS

THE BLACKMAILERS

THE want ad—after the manner of want ads—had read simply: "Boy, over 14, intelligent, trustworthy, for confidential office work, references. Address B-67 *Evening Express.*"

Several scores of boys, who were neither very intelligent nor peculiarly trustworthy, exposed their disqualifications —after the manner of boys—in the written applications that they made. Of these scores, a dozen boys received typewritten requests to call next morning at room 1056, in the Cranmer Building, on Broadway, for a personal interview with "H. M. Archibald." But of the dozen, only one knew what sort of confidential office work might be waiting for him in room 1056.

He was little Barney Cook. And he kept his information to himself.

The directory, on the wall of the building's entrance, did not assign 1056 to any of the names on its list. The elevator boys did not know who occupied 1056. The door of 1056 had nothing on its glass panel but the painted number; and the neighboring doors were equally discreet. The "Babbing Bureau" was the nearest name in the corridor, but its doors were marked "Private. Entrance at 1070."

Nor was there anything in the interior aspect of 1056 to enlighten any of Barney Cook's competitors when they came there to be interviewed. It was an ordinary outer office of the golden-oak variety, with a railing of spindles separating a telephone switchboard and two typewriter

(From "The Adventures of Detective Barney," by Harvey O'Higgins. The Century Company, New York. Copyright, 1915, by Harvey O'Higgins.)

desks from two public settles and a brass cuspidor. There were girls at the desks and the switchboard. The boys were on the settles or at the railing. The girls were busy, indifferent, chatty (among themselves) and very much at home. The boys, of course, were quite otherwise. They might have been suspected of having assumed a common expression of inert and anxious stupidity in order that each might conceal from all the others the required intelligence with which he hoped to win the "job."

Barney Cook alone betrayed the workings of a mind. He sat erect—stretching his neck—at the end of a settle nearest the gate of the railing, watching the door of an inner room and scrutinizing every one who came out of it. He paid no heed to the girls; he knew that they were merely clerks. But when he saw a rough-looking man appear, with a red handkerchief around his neck, he stared excitedly. Surely the bandana was a disguise! Perhaps the black mustache was false!

Forty-eight hours earlier, in the uniform of a telegraph boy, Barney had been in the public office of the Babbing Detective Bureau; and he had been asked to deliver an envelope to the advertising department of the *Evening Express* as he went back. The envelope was not sealed. It did stick slightly in places—but it was not sealed. And it contained the want ad. "Confidential office work"! For the famous Walter Babbing!

Young Barney had been delivering telegrams to the Babbing Bureau for months, without ever getting past the outer office at 1070, and without so much as suspecting the existence of these operatives' rooms and inner chambers down the hall. He had seen Babbing only once, when "the great detective" came out with one of his men while Barney was getting his book signed. Babbing stood in the doorway long enough to say: "I'll meet you at the station. Get the tickets. I'll send Jim down with my suit-case." The operative replied: "All right, Chief." And Barney knew that this was Walter Babbing.

He was a brisk-looking, clean-shaven, little fat man—

rather "a dude" to Barney—with a quietly mild expression and vague eyes.

Barney knew nothing of the scientific theory of "protective coloring" in detectives; he did not know that the most successful among them naturally look least like anything that might be expected of their kind. He went out, with his book open in his hand, absorbed in study of the picture of Babbing that had been photographed on his instantaneous young mind.

Subsequently, he decided that he had seen Walter Babbing without any make-up, in the private appearance that he reserved for office use among his men. And he was assisted to this conclusion by his knowledge of the adventures of Nick Carter which he read on the street cars, in the subways, on the benches in the waiting room of the telegraph office, or wherever else he had leisure. And it was the influence of these Nick Carter stories that had brought him now to 1056 in his Sunday best, with his hair brushed and his shoes polished, as guiltily excited as a truant, having lied to his mother and absented himself from his work in the wild hope of getting employment—confidential and mysterious employment—in the office of the great Babbing.

He was a rather plump and sturdy youth of sixteen, with an innocent brightness of face, brown-eyed, black-haired, not easily abashed and always ready with a smile. It was a dimpled smile, too; and he understood its value. In spite of his boyish ignorance of many things outside his immediate experience—such as famous detectives, for example—he knew his world and his way about in it; he met the events of his day with a practical understanding; and when he did not understand them he disarmed them with a grin. He was confident that he could get this job in the Babbing Bureau, in competition with any of the "boobs" who were waiting to dispute it with him, unless some one among them had a "pull." Being an experienced New Yorker, it was the fear of the pull that worried him.

He waited alertly on the edge of his settle, watching for an indication that the interviews with "H. M. Archi-

bald" were to begin, and ready to rise and thrust himself forward as the first applicant. For a moment he did not recognize Babbing when the detective entered, from an inner office, in a spring overcoat and a light felt hat.

He had a small black satchel in his hand. He spoke to the telephone girl. Barney heard her ask: "The Antwerp?" Babbing added: "Until three o'clock."

He came towards the gate of the railing, and Barney rose to open it for him. Babbing did not appear to notice him, so Barney preceded him to the door and opened that also. Still Babbing did not heed. "I'll take your satchel, Mr. Babbing," Barney said, authoritatively. And Babbing gave it to him in the manner of an absent mind.

The whole proceeding had been a sudden inspiration on Barney's part, born of a desire to distinguish himself, in Babbing's eyes, from the other prospective office boys on the settles. Now, with Babbing's satchel in his hand, he followed the detective into a well-filled elevator, confident of Babbing's notice; but as they dropped in the cage together, he observed that the detective was looking over his head, occupied with his own thoughts.

Barney got out before him, preceded him to the entrance of the building, and stood at a revolving door for Babbing to go first. Babbing passed him without a glance. A taxi-cab was waiting at the curb, and he crossed the sidewalk to it, with Barney at his heels. While he was speaking in a low tone to the driver, Barney opened the cab door and held it open for him to get in; and he got in, without remark. Barney put the satchel at his feet; but the feet, too, were blind; they did not move. Barney shut the door, reluctantly; and the indifferent auto slowly started up Broadway, intent upon the internal uproar of its own convulsions.

Barney did not understand that if you are a detective, confronted by an incident which you do not understand, you pretend that you do not see it, so that you may observe it without putting it on its guard. He stood looking after his wasted opportunity, for a regretful moment.

Then he turned and ran towards City Hall Park to get an express train in the subway station at the Bridge.

He knew that the Antwerp—if it was the Hotel Antwerp that was meant—was around the corner from the subway station at 42nd Street.

Barney wanted that "job." Babbing had it, so to speak, in his pocket. And with the shrewd simplicity of youth, Barney proposed to follow and put himself in the way until he was asked, impatiently: "Well, boy, what do you want?" Then he would say what he wanted—and probably get it.

Although the subway is not so expensive as a taxi-cab, it is speedier, in the long run; and Barney was standing near the door of the Antwerp—somewhat blown but cheerfully composed—when Babbing's car whirred around the corner and drew up to the sidewalk. Barney opened the cab door and took the satchel briskly, with a smile of recognition which the detective ignored. When the driver had been paid, Babbing turned into the hotel, apparently oblivious of his escort; and Barney followed undiscouraged, with the bag.

"Get away, kid," he said to the bell-boy who offered to carry it. "Er I'll bite your ankle."

Standing back at a respectful distance, he watched the detective get a letter and his room-key at the desk. When he went to the elevator, there was nothing for Barney to do but to go after him. In the elevator, Babbing said "Eighth," and busied himself with his letter, which he read and pondered on. He put it in his pocket and looked Barney over, for the first time, with an abstracted eye. Barney smiled at him, ingratiatingly. The smile met with no response.

And still Barney was not discouraged. He was not apprehensive. He was not even nervous. There was nothing forbidding in the mild reserve of the detective's face. He looked like a man of a kindly personality. He seemed easy-going and meditative. And Barney, of course, was not the first to get that impression of him. It was one of the things that explained Babbing's success.

He led the way down the padded carpet of the corridor to his room, and unlocked the door, and threw it open for Barney to enter one of the usual hotel bedrooms of the Antwerp's class, with the usual curly-maple furniture and elaborate curtains and thick carpeting. Barney put the satchel on the table, and waited in the center of stereotyped luxury. "When did Mr. Archibald take you on?" Babbing asked, aside, as he hung up his hat and overcoat.

"He hasn't taken me on—yet," Barney admitted.

Babbing put on a pair of unexpected spectacles and got out a ring of keys to unlock his bag. Occupied with that, he asked: "How did you know that I was coming here?"

Barney explained that he had overheard the instructions to the telephone girl.

The detective had begun to take, from his satchel, letters, telegrams, typewritten reports, and packages of papers strapped in rubber bands, which he proceeded to sort into little piles on the table, as they came. He appeared to be giving this business his whole attention, but while his hands moved deliberately and his eyes read the notations on the papers, he pursued Barney through an examination that ran: "How did you know who I was?"

"I delivered telegrams to your office an'——"

"For what company?"

"The Western Union."

"Why did you leave them?"

"I wanted to work fer you."

"How did you know we wanted a boy?"

"I saw the ad."

"How did you know it was ours?"

"I—I delivered it to the newspaper."

"Are you in the habit of opening letters that are given you to deliver?"

"No, sir."

"Don't smile so much. You overdo it," Babbing said, without looking up. And his merely professional tone of matter-of-fact advice sobered Barney as suddenly as if

he had said: "I understand, of course, that you have found your smile very effective, but it doesn't deceive *me*. You're not so bland a child as you pretend, and I shall not treat you as if you were."

Barney shifted uncomfortably on his feet. The absent-minded ease with which Babbing had plied him with questions and caught up his answers made him fearful for the approach of the moment when the detective should give him a concentrated attention and begin forcibly to ransack him and turn him inside out.

Babbing asked unexpectedly: "How tall are you?"

"About five feet," Barney answered at a guess.

"How much do you weigh?"

"About a hundred—an' twenty-five."

Babbing glanced at him appraisingly, went on with his papers again, and said: "When you don't know a thing, say so. It saves time. What's your name?"

"Barney. Barney Cook."

"Where do you live?"

Barney gave the number of his home in Hudson Street.

"The Greenwich village quarter?"

"Yes, sir."

"Irish-Catholic?"

"Yes, sir."

"What does your father do?"

"He's dead. He was a policeman. He was killed."

"What was his name?"

"Robert E. Cook."

"Robert Emmet?"

"Yes, sir."

"When was he killed? How long ago?"

"About eight years."

Babbing was still at his papers. "Is your mother living?"

"Yes, sir."

"What does *she* do?"

"Looks after me an' my sister."

"What does she do for a living?"

"She rents furnished rooms. Her an' Annie. That's my sister."

"What does she do with your father's pension?"
"She puts it all in the bank."
"What bank?"
"I—I dunno."
"She doesn't own the house?"
"No, sir."
"Who owns it?"
"I—I forget."
"You went to the parochial school?"
"Yes, sir."

Babbing had found a typewritten report for which he had evidently been looking. As he crossed the room to the telephone, he asked: "Do you smoke cigarettes?"

"No, sir."

Babbing took down the receiver from its hook. "When did you quit?"

Barney hesitated guiltily a moment. Then he answered: "This morning."

"Give me room eight-twenty," Babbing said, into the 'phone. He added, to Barney: "You can't work for me, if you're going to smoke. It will spoil your nerve." And while Barney, dumb with incredulous hope, was still staring at the implication of that warning, Babbing said: "Hello. This is eight-fourteen. Can you get in to see me for a few minutes? . . . Yes. . . . Have you received that uniform yet? . . . Bring it in with you."

He hung up the receiver but kept his hand on it. "Sit down," he said to Barney. He continued, to the telephone: "Get me one-seven-three-one Desbrosses. . . . Hello. . . . Archibald. Babbing. . . . You have an application there —in answer to our want ad—from a boy named Barney Cook. Have you looked up any of his references? . . . He says he delivered telegrams to us for the Western Union. His father was Robert Emmet Cook, a patrolman, killed about eight years ago. His mother lives in Hudson Street, where she rents furnished rooms. Run it out. 'Phone me right away, about the telegraph company and the police." He turned abruptly, to scrutinize Barney over his spectacles. And Barney, seeing himself engaged if his refer-

ences proved satisfactory, did not attempt to suppress his triumphant grin.

"Well," Babbing said, "you don't look much like a plant,——"

"No, sir," Barney admitted, not knowing in the least what was meant. He rose, at the end of a successful interview.

"Sit down," Babbing said, "your troubles have just begun. Come in!"

That last was in response to a knock at the door; and a man entered on the invitation, nonchalantly, with his hat on, carrying what proved to be a suit of black clothes on his arm. He was a large, dark, breezy-looking, informal sort of individual, about thirty-five; and Barney at once misplaced him as a Broadway type of "rounder" and race-track "sport." He ignored Barney and proceeded to drape the clothes over the foot of the bed, as if he had come merely to bring the suit. Barney did not guess that because of *his* presence the man did not speak to Babbing—until Babbing, by a question, indicated that it was all right to talk.

"Any one been to see him to-day?" Babbing asked.

"Not a soul," he answered. "He's been out, this morning, but he didn't connect."

"Snider has picked up some more telegrams." Babbing held out the report to him. "In cipher."

"Got their code yet?"

"No. If we had that, we'd have everything. We can figure out a word here and there. The names are easy. But that's as far as we can get."

They stood together beside the table, their feet in a patch of sunlight, their backs to Barney, interested in a page of the report which Babbing was showing to his operative. "'Kacaderm,' for instance. That's 'Murdock.' He's one of the men they've been bleeding, out there. They take the consonants 'm-r-d-c-k,' reverse them 'k-c-d-r-m,' and fill in vowels. But they do that only with the proper names. For instance, this last one: 'Thunder com-

mand wind kacaderm.' That can't be solved by reversing consonants."

The operative studied the page. "Search *me*," he said. "Has Acker worked on it?"

"Yes. It was he that puzzled out the names. It's not a cryptogram. They have some simple method of writing one whole word for another. There's no use wasting time on it. We'll have to make our plant to catch him writing a message."

"I see."

Babbing took off his spectacles and began to walk up and down the room, twirling them by the ear bows. The operative sat on the side of the bed, leaning forward, with his hands clasped between his knees. He removed his derby and gazed thoughtfully into it, as if he hoped to find an idea there. It remained empty.

Babbing stopped in front of Barney. "Young man," he said, "I'm going to send you into the next room with a telegram. There's a man in there—registered as Marshall Cooper. Remember the name. You'll give the telegram to him and say 'Any answer?' Watch him. It will be a cipher telegram that will look as if it had been received downstairs. See what he does to make it out. He'll probably want to answer it; and if he does, you may have a chance to see how he makes up the answer. He has a writing table over at this window—here. If he sits down at it, he'll have his back to you. Try to see what he does. Don't try to do it by watching him quietly. He'd notice that. Move around and look at the pictures. Don't try to whistle—or anything of that fool sort. Try to act as you would if you were a bell-boy." He had taken the suit of clothes from the foot of the bed. "Go in the bathroom and try these on."

Afterward, when Barney thought of this moment, it seemed to him romantic and exciting beyond all his wildest young adventurous hopes. It seemed to him that he must have jumped to his feet with delight. As a matter of fact, he rose very soberly and took the clothes. His mind was busy with Babbing's directions which he was conning over

and repeating to himself, so that he might be sure to make no mistakes. He was troubled about his ability to do what was expected of him. And he went into the bathroom and took off his Sunday twilled serge, and put on the black uniform of an Antwerp bell-boy mechanically, without thinking of himself as engaged in a Nick Carter exploit. Besides, the trousers were too long in the legs, and he had to pull them up until they were uncomfortable.

He heard Babbing answering the telephone, but he did not suspect that the detective was receiving a confirmatory report, from his office, upon Robert Emmet Cook's record at Police Headquarters and Barney Cook's service with the Western Union. Barney was not listening to what was going on around him, nor thinking of it. His thoughts were in Marshall Cooper's room. He was dramatising a scene with that gentleman.

The voices of Babbing and his operative conferred together imperturbably:

"How are we going to send him a cipher telegram, Chief, if we don't know his code?"

"I'm going to repeat the one he got last night from Chicago. 'Thunder command wind kacaderm.' He hasn't answered it?"

"Unless by letter. And they wouldn't get that till to-night."

Babbing said: "He'll not go to the telegraph desk asking questions, because he won't care to identify himself to the man there. That's why he goes out to send his messages."

"Suppose he doesn't let the kid into the room at all."

"Well, he opens the door. The boy gives him the telegram and asks 'Any answer'? He reads it and sees it's the same message that he had last night. That'll make him forget the boy. He'll be trying to figure out what has happened. And the boy can stand at the door and watch him. It's worth trying anyway. Go and get the telegram ready, Jim."

"What is it, again?"

" 'Thunder command wind kacaderm.' Unsigned."
" 'Thunder—command—wind—kacaderm.' "
"Have you the envelopes?"
"Yep. Billy has everything in there."
"Don't seal it till I've looked it over."
"All right, Chief."

The operative—whose name was Corcoran—departed with the unbustling celerity of a man accustomed to quick and noiseless movement. Babbing went to the bathroom door. "That's not so bad," he said of Barney's uniform. "Turn around." He settled the coat collar with a tug and a friendly pat. "Wipe off your shoes with a towel. The halls of the Antwerp aren't as dusty as all that." Barney looked up smiling, and found the detective's eyes kindly, amused, encouraging. "I ought to send you out to get a new pair," Babbing said, "but there isn't time. Come in here, now, and let's go over this again. I have an improvement to suggest."

He went to the window and stood looking out. Barney waited in the center of the room, excitedly alert. "You're a bell-boy recently employed here," Babbing said. "The man at the telegraph desk has said to you: 'Take this up to Mr. Cooper, room eight-eighteen, and see that he gets it, this time. It's a repeat.' That's not according to Hoyle, but it will have to do. Cooper won't know any better, anyway. So when you deliver the telegram at Cooper's door, you say: 'I was to be sure that you got this, this time. It's a repeat.' Step inside when you give him the message, so that he can't shut the door. And then watch him, as I told you before."

He stopped. He eyed Barney skeptically. "You couldn't possibly be as innocent as you look, could you? Because you'll have to do some quick lying, you know, if he suspects anything."

Barney looked sheepish.

"Here," Babbing said, suddenly. He took a letter from the table and gave it to the boy. "Go into the bathroom. No. The door opens in. I'll go in the bathroom, and you can come to the door and deliver this telegram. Let's

see how you do it." And he went into the bathroom and shut the door on himself.

Barney turned the letter over in his hands. He frowned a moment at the door. Then he went up to it and rapped. There was no answer. He knocked more loudly. A voice, disconcertingly gruff, asked, "What is it?"

"A telegram, sir," Barney answered.

"Put it under the door."

Barney smiled to himself—the cunning smile of a child in a game. "They said I was to see that you got it, this time. It's a repeat."

The door was opened a few grudging inches. "What's that?"

"They said I was to see that Mr. Cooper got it, this time. It's a repeat."

"Well, I'm Mr. Cooper. Give it here." He put his hand out, still blocking the half-opened door. Barney gave him the letter. The door shut in his face.

Barney blinked at the panels. Then he knocked again sharply. Babbing opened the door.

"Well, what is it?"

"They didn't give me a receipt form," Barney said. "Will you sign the envelope an' give it back to me?"

"Have you a pencil?"

"No, sir," Barney said.

"Well, wait there till I find one."

Barney tried the door slyly. It opened. He edged in, over the threshold. "If you want to send an answer, sir," he said, "I can take it."

Babbing caught him by the "cowlick" that adorned his ingenuous young forehead. "Get out of here," he laughed, "or I'll have you arrested." And Barney, as startled as if he had been wakened from a dream, grinned confusedly. "That's all right," Babbing said. "If you do it as well as that."

"Was I all right?" Barney cried, exulting. "Was I?" He knew that he was; he could see it in Babbing's face; but he wanted to hear it. And he spoke in the voice of a boy playing with a boy.

Babbing changed his expression. "Yes, but this 'Nick Carter' stuff," he said, pointing to Barney's coat on a hook, "you mustn't destroy your mind with that sort of thing. That must stop with your cigarettes."

It returned Barney instantly to the hypocritical schoolroom manner of a pupil reproved by his teacher. "Yes, sir," he promised.

"Well, we'll see." Babbing was non-committal and unenthusiastic. "You've a lot to learn, yet."

Barney asked, shyly: "What's he been doin'?"

"Who?"

"Mr. Cooper."

Babbing turned back to the bedroom. "That's my business, not yours. You do what you're told—in my office—and don't ask questions. And don't discuss cases. That's another thing to learn. . . . Come in," he called to Corcoran's knock.

The operative came in, taking a telegraph envelope from his pocket. He gave it to Babbing, cheerfully silent. The detective put on his glasses and scrutinized it. He took out the telegram and read it. He compared the "time received" with his watch. "That looks convincing," he said. He moistened a finger tip and delicately wetted the gummed flap. "We can give it a couple of minutes to dry." He handed it to Barney. He went through his pockets for silver. "These are tips you've received. A dollar on account of salary. He may ask you for change. . . . Now don't be over-anxious. If this doesn't work, we'll find some other way. If he gets suspicious and telephones to the desk—or anything of that sort—just get in here as quickly as you can, and we'll protect you. Sit down a minute." He turned to the papers on his table. "Jim," he said, "you remember the disappearance case we had in Dayton—the little girl."

"Yes?"

"Our theory worked out all right. They've got a confession from the nigger and found the body in the bushes where he buried it. Here's Wally's report."

Corcoran took the paper and sat down to read it. "I hope they'll hang the black——" he said piously.

Babbing consulted his watch. "Mr. Bellboy," he said at last, "you have a telegram for Mr. Cooper in eight-eighteen. Go ahead and deliver it."

Barney had a sensation of peculiar heaviness in the knees as he walked stiffly to the door. ("They said I was to see that you got it, this time.") Outside, he paused to close the door with unnecessary gentleness and make sure that the corridor was empty. ("It's a repeat.") Where was 818? He saw 819 across the hall to his left. He put a finger down the back of his neck, and eased his collar. He cleared his throat of nervousness. He walked boldly to 818, raised his small knuckles to a panel, and knocked.

There was no answer. He had put up his hand to knock again, when the door opened and a tall man in slippers and bathrobe asked, "Well?"

"A telegram for Mr. Cooper," Barney said steadily. "They tol' me to see that he got it, this time. It's a repeat."

Cooper stood back. "Come in." His voice was pitched low. "What did you say?"

Barney came across the threshold and Cooper closed the door on him. "It's a repeat," Barney said, "an' they told me to see that you got it, this time." He held out the telegram.

Cooper took it nervously. He was a gaunt-featured, long-nosed, lean man, with deep lines from his nostrils to the corners of his thin lips. There was a little patch of lather drying on one cheek-bone, and Barney understood that he had been shaving. He wiped his hand on his bathrobe before he took the telegram, and he fumbled over it. Barney found himself suddenly cool and confident. He noticed that Cooper's hands were very thin and very hairy; and he looked at them and then slowly looked Cooper over with a curious feeling of contempt. It was the contempt that accounts for half the daring of spies and detectives. People are so easily deceived, so easily outwitted. Their attention is so easily caught with

one hand while the other goes unwatched. Barney was learning his trade.

"Why!" Cooper said. "I got this last night."

"May be you didn' answer it," Barney suggested. "It's a repeat."

He puzzled over it. "Well," he said, "I——" His voice faded out in the tone of abstraction. He turned and shuffled across the room to his writing desk, his eyes on the telegram. Unconscious of Barney's craning watchfulness, he took a small cloth-bound volume from an upper drawer of the little escritoire and turned the printed pages, comparing the words in the message with words in the book. The code book!

"If you want to send an answer," Barney said boldly, moving down towards him, "I could take it."

He did not reply. He sat down to the desk and took a pencil and wrote, and consulted the book carefully with his pencil point on the page, and came back again to the message, and returned to find another page in the book. "No, that's all right," he said, finally. He tore the telegram and retore it into tiny pieces. "There's no answer." He made as if to throw the torn paper into the waste basket, and then he checked himself. "Wait a minute," he said, rising; and Barney understood that he was to have a tip.

Cooper shuffled off to the bathroom in his slippers.

Barney, as pale as a thief, darted to the secretary and crammed the little code book into his pocket.

When Cooper returned to the room, the bell-boy was standing near the door looking up at a framed engraving. He took the dime that Cooper gave him, and said stiffly, "Thanks," but without raising his guilty eyes. As he went out, he glanced back and saw that Cooper was returning to the bathroom. Gee!

He was so obviously—so breathlessly—excited when he burst in upon the detectives that Corcoran came to his feet at sight of him. "What's the matter?"

Babbing jerked off his spectacles. "What has happened?"

"I go-got it," Barney stammered, tugging at the book that stuck in his pocket.

"Got what?"

"His—his book."

"What!" Corcoran grabbed him roughly by the shoulder and snatched the volume from his hand. He glanced at its brown cloth cover. *"What?"* he cried. And that second "What" expressed the extreme of incredulous disgust. He held out the book to Babbing who had not moved from his seat at the table. "He's swiped the man's dictionary!"

Babbing looked at it. It was a "pocket Webster," a cheap abridged edition, on cheap paper. "Where did you get this?" he asked; and there was no kindly personality showing in the cold malevolence of his flat eyes.

"On his desk. I——"

"Why did you bring it?"

"Oh, hell!" Corcoran muttered. "This *kid* business!"

"That'll do!" Babbing flared out at him. "I'm in charge of this case."

They glared at each other, as if they were old enemies, with old jealousies concealed and long injustices unforgiven. Corcoran turned with a shrug and sat down on the bed. Babbing rounded on the boy again.

"Why did you bring this?"

"Well, gee," Barney defended himself. "As soon as he got the telegram, he beat it to his desk an' yanked this book out of a drawer, an' began to hunt the words up in it, an'——"

"Wait a minute. Corcoran get on watch out there. If you hear anything, come back for this boy. Take him in to Cooper and tell him you're the house detective —that you caught the boy with this book and he confessed he'd stolen it from eight-eighteen. Give it back and ask him not to prosecute—because it would hurt the hotel. He won't anyway. And that'll hold him quiet till we can get time to turn round. Otherwise, we've tipped our hand."

Corcoran was already at the door. He went out on the final word.

"Now," Babbing said, with perfect suavity, "take your time. Show me exactly what he did."

"Well, I ok-a-here!" Barney took the book. "He got this out o' the drawer, an' then he sat down this way, an' got a pencil, an' then he wrote down the telegram——"

"Wrote it down? Where? On what?"

"On a piece o' paper. An' then he looks in the book, this way, an' gets a word. An' then he looks at the telegram. An' then he goes back to the book an' turns over the pages. An' then he——"

Babbing reached the dictionary from him. "Wait." He put on his spectacles and wrote on the back of an envelope: "Thunder command wind kacaderm." Below that he wrote it again, reversed, and then several times with the words transposed and permuted in all possible orders. He turned to the word "thunder" in the dictionary. It was at the bottom of the first of the three narrow columns that filled the page. He studied it. He studied the words around it. He turned the page, and his eyes widened thoughtfully on the word "through" at the bottom of the third column. The line read "Through, (throo) *prep.* from." And on the margin the point of a pencil had made a light indentation. He turned back to "Thunder"; and on the margin there, the pencil mark showed in a raised point.

He wrote, under the word "thunder" on his paper, the word "through."

He turned to the word "command" in the dictionary, but after a prolonged scrutiny he wrote nothing.

He turned to "wind." And he found, on the same page but in another column, the word "will" touched with a faint pencil mark. He sat back in his chair and his face became meditatively blank.

His eyelids constricted sharply. He wrote: "Murdock will come through." Turning back in the dictionary to the word "command," he found "come" standing directly

beside it in the parallel column of print on the page. He looked at Barney and nodded. "Got it!" he said, grimly. "Go and bring Corcoran."

Barney, almost running—but on his tiptoes—with the secrecy and the excitement, saw himself vindicated to the surprised Corcoran. He saw himself the hero of the occasion. He had solved the mystery! He had discovered the cipher! He signaled imperiously to Corcoran in the hall. The operative came scowling.

When they returned to the room, Babbing said: "Sit down there, boy, and keep quiet. You scuttle like a rat. . . . Jim, I've got his method. I want you to send off some messages while I'm translating these. Wire our Chicago office: 'Case 11A393. Case completed. Immediately arrest Number Two on information in your files.' Wire Indianapolis in the same words to grab Pirie. He's Number Three. And have Billy 'phone the office to get papers and an officer up here, at once, for our friend next door. I'll hold him till they come. Go ahead. I'll finish this."

He settled down to his task studiously, copying out cipher telegrams, and writing between the lines the translated words as he found them in the dictionary. And in a room that was quiet and sunny, working with a little complacent pucker of the lips occasionally, or raising his eyebrows and adjusting his spectacles in a pause of doubt, he looked anything but sinister, anything but the traditional "bloodhound" on the trail in a man-hunt. There was something Pickwickian in his small rotundity. The nattiness of his business suit gave him an air of conventional unimportance.

Barney watched him fascinatedly. His plump little hands—his rather flat profile with its small beaked nose and the owlish spectacles—his dimpled chin—all reminded the boy of some one incongruous whom he could not place. When Babbing took out a white silk handkerchief to polish his glasses and buried his nose in it before he replaced it in his pocket, Barney remembered. It was a bishop who had once graced the closing exercises of the

parochial school by conferring the prizes. He had given Barney a "Lives of the Saints."

"Now, young man," Babbing said, "get off that uniform. I'm going in to get a statement from your Mr. Cooper. If any one rings me up, take the number. If any of the men come in here, tell them where I am. I'm registered as A. T. Hume. Wait here till I come back." He had taken a small blue-metal "automatic" from his hip pocket and put it in the side pocket of his coat. He gathered up his notes and the dictionary. "Don't make the mistake again of exceeding your instructions. You've forced our hand, already."

"Yes, sir," Barney said, contritely. But the door had scarcely closed before he was capering. He did a sort of disrobing dance, his face fearfully contorted with grins that were a silent equivalent of whoops of delight. And it was an interpretative dance. It expressed liberation from drudgery and the dull commonplace. It welcomed rhythmically a life of adventure, in which a boy's natural propensity to lie should be not only unchecked but encouraged—that should give him, daily, games to play, hidings to seek, simple elders to hoodwink and masquerades to wear. He danced it, in his shirt sleeves, waving his coat—and in his shirt tails waving coat and trousers. It stopped as suddenly as it had begun, and he darted into the bathroom to be ready in case he should be called upon.

He was clothed and sober—rocking himself to an ecstatic croon in one of the Antwerp's bedroom rockers—when he heard a thudded report in the hall. It sounded to him as if two books had been clapped together. He sat listening.

Babbing came in. "Get out of here, boy. What have you done with that uniform? Put it in my valise. Snap it shut. Hurry. Report to the office to-morrow morning at eight-thirty." He was at the telephone. "Give me the house detective," he said. "What? Mr. Dohn, your house detective." He put his hand over the transmitter. "How much have you been earning?"

"Six dollars a week—with the tips."

"You'll start at twelve. Hurry up. Get out of here. To-morrow morning at eight-thirty."

Barney started for the door, reluctantly.

"Hello. Dohn? This is Babbing. Get up here as quick as you can with a doctor. That Chicago swindler in eight-eighteen has shot himself. Through the mouth. He's blown the back of his head out. Hurry up!"

Barney, slamming the door behind him, fled down the hall, frightened, aghast, but with a high exultant inner voice still crooning triumphantly: "I'm a de-*tec*-tive! I'm a de-*tec*-tive!" Through the mouth! The back of his head out! Even in his horror there was a pleasurable shudder, for he had all a boy's healthy curiosity about murder, shootings and affairs of bloodshed. "I'm a de-*tec*-tive!" And he hurried to tell his mother of his new job, aware that she would cry out against it—till he explained: "I start at twelve a week." That would settle it with her. "I'm a detective! I'm a detective!"

HARVEY O'HIGGINS

BARNEY HAS A HUNCH

THIS was a warm afternon in June. It was humid after a morning's rain. And City Hall Square was at once hot and moist and noisy and crowded, so that the very air seemed to be stifled and perspiring, as if it were panting with uproar and exhausted by the persecutions of haste. Barney was standing in the oppressive shade of the *World* building, with some limp newspapers under his arm—disguised in an old suit of clothes that he had outgrown and a cap that he had once discarded—perfunctorily making a show of seeking customers, and vacantly watching the faces that passed. He was supposed to be on the lookout for a suspect who had escaped the surveillance of the Babbing Bureau, in Brooklyn; and he had been waiting so, for several days, at the Bridge entrance, for the purpose of picking up the man's trail again if he should happen by. But the continuous stream of traffic had put him into the day-dream of an idler who lolls on a bridge to watch running water; and whenever he became sensible of his surroundings it was merely to envy the crowd in front of the *World's* score-board, who could follow the baseball game—as he could not.

A passer-by aroused him by offering him a nickel for a newspaper, and glanced at the front page with a hand still held out for change. Barney yawned as he counted the four cents into the open palm. The fingers closed on the money, but the hand did not move. Barney, surprised, looked up from the hand to the owner of it. The man

(From "Adventures of Detective Barney," by Harvey O'Higgins. The Century Company, New York. Copyright, 1915, by Harvey O'Higgins.)

was reading headlines so intently that he was unconscious of all else, and he was blinking at what he read, with his lips pressed together in some sort of instinctive effort to conceal any betrayal of the excitement that showed in his eyes.

It did not take him more than two or three "bats" of the eyelid—as Barney would have said—to gather the meaning of the headlines. Then he hastily folded up the paper, thrust his change into his pocket and hurried away with the air of having picked up something that he wished to examine in secret. And Barney, after one blank moment of staring hesitation, followed him hypnotically.

Those headlines announced, as Barney knew, that the father of Elizabeth Baxter had offered a reward of $5,000 to any one who could discover what had become of her. And Barney had suddenly found himself with what detectives call "a hunch." He could not have explained it. He could not have defended it. But into his empty brain, on the instant that he had seen the man's expression, there had come a conviction that this respectable-looking stranger had a guilty knowledge of the Baxter case. Of the dozen innocent explanations of the man's manner, he could not have combated one. And he did not know enough about the case to judge what possible connection this fellow might have with it. He was not even sufficiently conscious of his mental operations to ask himself whether he ought to leave his post at the Bridge to follow such a vague scent. He followed it as unreasoningly as an animal that is carried away by an instinct.

And once having abandoned himself to it, he was possessed by it to the exclusion of everything else. "Here, kid," he said, hastily, aside, to the first newsboy that he met, "take my stock. I'll see you later"; and he gave up his papers to the gaping newsie as recklessly as he had given up his post. He went along Nassau Street, looking anywhere except at the panama hat and blue-serge shoulders that he followed; but he did not see anything except these; the rest was in his eyes, but not in

his mind; and he had the large, idle, disinterested stare of an operative who is tailing.

He turned down Broadway, in this manner, expecting to see his man enter an office building, and ready to close upon him, so that he might not lose him at an elevator. At Liberty Street, he followed across Broadway, and saw his quarry making towards the waterfront. And then he realized that it was after five o'clock and the man was a suburbanite going home. He felt in his pocket to assure himself that he had his twenty-five dollars of expense money—given him to use, if he should need it, in following the Brooklyn suspect. He found it and kept his hand on it. With that, nothing could stop him. The man had no bag; he could not be going far. Once traced to his home, Babbing could be reached by telephone, and the Bureau could do the rest.

And even this thought of Babbing did not halt him. It rather drove him on. Instead of stopping to reconsider what he was doing—in the aspect that it would wear if it ended badly—he was so obsessed by the assurance of its ending well that he hastened to meet the conclusion that should vindicate him. And as if the thought of Babbing were Babbing himself pursuing him, he only glanced behind at it, and then hurried the more, to reach the safe end of the adventure before he could be overtaken. He had been too long bored by the routine of subordinate work that had no thrill in it. Here was a bit of scouting on his own responsibility—with the chance of a little distinction, if he succeeded. The pursuing doubt of what would happen if he failed, only added the excitement of truancy.

He came to the ferry house of the Jersey Central Railroad, so close on the heels of his "subject" that he had to go ahead when the man stopped to buy more newspapers at the entrance. But inside the doors, Barney dawdled until he was behind again, and only closed up to see the suburbanite show a commutation ticket at the gates. Barney was ignorant enough to suppose that the ticket was a pass, because the gateman did not punch it;

but he was not too ignorant to know that he could get through the gates by paying his fare on the ferry—three cents—which he took from his newspaper pennies in his coat-pocket. He was puzzled to know how to discover for what destination he should buy a ticket; for if the man was traveling on a pass he could get off or on the train wherever he pleased, with no questions asked.

A ferry boat was waiting in its slip, and the man entered the woman's saloon while Barney went in among the smokers. He had had enough experience in tailing to know that he ought not to be visible to his subject when he could cover him from ambush; and he walked confidently to the forward end of the boat, to wait there until his man should come out to disembark. He was worried about his railroad ticket. He foresaw that without one he would not be able to pass the gates in the railroad station; and he might not have time to run back to buy a ticket after he had seen what train he ought to take.

While the ferry boat was threading its way across the traffic of the river, he was busy devising stratagems to outwit the gatekeeper. He would pretend that his mother was on the train with his ticket. Or he would come running, as an office boy, with a verbal message to his employer, who was a passenger. Or he would say that he had missed a man in a Panama hat and a blue-serge suit, who had his ticket; and had such a man passed the gates?

Considering his clothes, he decided that he had better say he was traveling with his mother, who was a cook, newly hired to work in some country place of which he did not know the name. He was to have met her on the station platform. He had missed her. She had his ticket. He wanted to go and look for her.

That ought to be convincing. He decided to try it. The ferry boat was nosing and bumping its way into its dock at Jersey City when the Panama hat came out with a crowd of passengers, and Barney manœuvered to get a good look at the wearer of it. The sum of his observation

was that the man appeared inoffensive. He was well-dressed, but his clothes showed both the wear that they had had and the care that had been taken of them. He carried gloves—though it was so warm—but they were soiled leather gloves that had evidently weathered the winter. He was an oldish young man, an office worker probably, well-featured, of the lean type. Barney had often delivered telegrams to his kind, in down-town offices, behind spindle railings at secretarial desks. The only thing unusual about him was the set look of distant expectancy with which he kept his eyes fixed on nothing ahead of him, uneasily, excitedly, but with no guilty suspicion of any one around him.

He pushed his way through the stream of passengers that went ashore with him, and Barney had to race to keep up. In the trainshed, he went directly to his train, with the assurance of custom, knowing exactly where to find it. And to Barney's relief there were no gates and no gate-keepers. A board at the track-end gave a list of the stations at which the train stopped. The last of these was "Somerville." Barney said to himself "Me fer Somerville"—and followed down the platform.

He was led to the smoking car, which was hardly more than half a car, because the forward part of it had been cut off to make a baggage room. He took the seat nearest the rear door, and watched some of the suburbanites getting squares of heavy cardboard from the baggage man to use as card-tables on their knees; they sat down in fours, here and there, to play. The Panama hat was invited to join some acquaintance at euchre, and declined; he was engaged with his newspapers and a brier pipe. A man directly in front of Barney was hailed to make the fourth in the game, and threw aside his paper to accept. Barney leaned over the back of the seat and took the paper. At that moment, the train started, and his young imagination—that had been reined in restively while he watched—was set galloping with the forward motion—so that when he opened his paper, to study out the Baxter case, he could no more control his attention than if he

were in school with a text book, on a Spring day, beside an open window that overlooked a baseball game.

He frowned diligently at a portrait of Elizabeth Baxter smiling, on the front page,—a dark girl of twenty, naïvely handsome and self-assured. He gathered from her picture nothing more than a feeling that her smile was incongruous. He did not understand that the photograph had been originally published with the announcement of her engagement to marry a conspicuously wealthy old bachelor named Huntley—an occasion for which a smile was fitting. He stared at the Panama hat. He looked out of the window absent-mindedly. He smiled to himself. He came back to his newspaper with a guilty start.

This is what he should have been reading: Miss Elizabeth Baxter was the only daughter of D. B. Baxter, who was vaguely described as a "well-known Wall Street man." She had left her father's apartment in the Antonia one morning, to go to her dressmaker; and she had telephoned to her maid, two hours later, that she would not be home for luncheon. She had not returned for dinner either. Nor for the night. Next morning, private detectives, secretly employed by her father and her fiancé, had started on her trail, and by the end of two weeks they had found that she had been to her dressmaker's at ten o'clock in the morning; that she had bought a novel in a Fifth Avenue bookshop at half-past eleven; that she had telephoned at a quarter to twelve from a candy store where she had bought a box of chocolates; that when she left the candy store, she disappeared "as completely as if the earth had opened and swallowed her." No trace of her had been found. No word had come from her. At the end of two weeks, her frightened parent appealed to the police, and the police counseled secrecy, because it would be easier to discover the criminal if no alarm were raised.

They discovered nothing. There was no reason why she should have run away. She had no enemies, no love affairs —except the legitimate one with her fiancé—no troubles either of body or mind, no secrets that the police detectives could so much as raise a suspicion of.

Then her father offered a reward and gave his story to the newspapers. Another "mysterious disappearance!" Lists were printed of the names of girls who had been reported "missing" to the New York police in the year past, and they made an alarming array of victims for "a plague of crime" that threatened "every home." If the "rich and beautiful" Elizabeth Baxter were not safe, whose daughter could be considered beyond danger? She had been destroyed by the White Slave trade and the "poison needle." She had been snatched away from crowded Fifth Avenue, at midday, in broad sunlight, and barred up in some noisome den of abductors. She would be murdered now—to escape detection—if she had not been murdered already.

Her case had been discussed, that morning, in the operatives' room of the Babbing Bureau, but Barney had heard only one authoritative remark upon it, and that had been repeated as Babbing's diagnosis:—"When a girl buys a book and a box of chocolates, she's going on a railroad journey. This poison needle talk is all bunk! Did you ever try to give a hypodermic injection? Next thing, these newspaper boys will be running stories of girls being followed on Fifth Avenue and tattooed down the back without knowing it!"

Barney said "Somerville" to the conductor, and gave him five dollars, and did not even count the change. "When a girl buys a book and a box of chocolates, she's going on a railroad journey." He was in a state to find a confirmation of his "hunch" in the fact that he was on a railroad journey himself, and he gazed out the window at Newark Bay as if he expected to discover there some trace of her passage. *She* must have looked out at that water as she went by.

The man in the Panama hat did not disengage himself from his newspapers until the car had almost emptied itself at Plainfield. Then he began to make preparations for his arrival at the next station—which the conductor had announced as "Findellen"—and Barney, watching him, took his own paper up again, to shield himself behind it, in case the man should glance at him in passing.

"Fin-dell'n!" "Fin-dell'n!"

Barney spread his sheet and hunched his shoulders. The train had stopped before he dared look around; and when he reached the car platform his man had already disappeared in the station.

"This isn't Somerville," the conductor said.

Barney nodded. " 'S all right. Keep the change."

He felt cocky. Not only because he thought he had traced the Baxter mystery to its lair in Findellen, but because Findellen was so small a village to his superior metropolitan eye. It had one "front" street of shops about as imposing as a row of booths on Coney Island, and its old frame station house was little better than a Harlem shack to Barney. He entered the waiting-room and found it empty—except for a row of benches around the walls, some country cuspidors, and an old base-burner, cold and rusty, that was still standing where the winter had left it. He screened himself behind the stove to spy through the open doorway, and he saw his man cranking a little touring car in which a woman sat at the steering wheel. An automobile!

An automobile presented such an unexpected difficulty to tailing that he stood gazing at the car as if it were an impassable obstacle that had suddenly blocked his way. It moved from the square of the door frame. He hurried to the door. The machine was already disappearing up the street that led straight from the station into the hills behind Findellen. He pulled down the peak of his cap and started after it desperately.

Crossing the road, he crossed the car's trail in the paste of red Jersey mud that remained from the morning's rain; and three of the wheels had left smooth tracks where the car had turned, and the fourth had imprinted the indented pattern of a corrugated shoe designed to prevent skidding. Barney slowed his pace to study it. He glanced at the sky, that showed sunset colours. He drew a dollar watch from his trouser pocket and found it five minutes after six. He put his cap back from his forehead thoughtfully, and turned along the main street—away

from the trail of the automobile—to find a hardware store. He could not follow a track in the mud after dark. He had to have a lantern.

At seven o'clock, with a little electric lamp in his pocket, he was climbing the hill road behind Findellen, munching crackers and cheese that he had bought from a grocery store, and keeping an occasional eye on the corrugations of the automobile track, to make sure that it was still with him. The road slanted obliquely up the side of a ridge that was too steep to be cleared for farming, and Barney could see nothing but bushes, trees, and undergrowth. He could hear nothing but the twilight song of a wood-bird. He neither looked nor listened. In animate or inanimate nature he had, at his most leisurely moments, only sufficient interest to throw a stone at it. Just now, he was not in a holiday mood to try his aim on anything. He had natural human instincts, even if he did not belong to a gun club.

At the top of the hill the road paused at the turn to show him a panorama of the flats in which Findellen and the railroad lay, under an evening mist. He did not admire the view, although it was admirable. He thought the street lights made a poor showing after New York—as if the place were living by candlelight in a bare world that was too large for it.

He turned his back on it and came over the crest of the hill to see the valley to which the road was leading.

It was a charming valley, with the last light softening its pleasant alternations of field and orchard, smooth meadows and clustered woods. To Barney it was merely "goose pastures," as Hudson Street calls the green suburbs. It was empty of shop windows, bill boards, moving picture fronts, newspaper bulletins, hurdy-gurdies, passers-by, street traffic, peddlers, or any of the noise and movement of affairs that make life in the open air interesting. And it was inhabited by poor country boobs who lived in loneliness, with their eyes on the city, growing cabbages to sell in town.

There could be no doubt that the man in the Panama

hat was a crook, concealing himself from the police. That was the only reason why he should live in such a place. Well, it was probably "one better than being in jail."

The road descended a more gradual slope than it had climbed, and Barney trudged along doggedly, with his mind on his destination. He expected to be walking all night, because, of course, the man would not have an auto if he lived within easy walking distance of the station. And Barney intended, when he had located the house, to wait until daylight to reconnoiter before deciding how to make his approach.

He crossed a bridge that was little larger than a culvert over a stream that was no more than a liquid note among pebbles. There was a clearing on his left, with a house in it and a barn; the automobile track did not pass it more indifferently than Barney did. The road dipped and rose again, turned through woods, came out on open fields, dropped through a grove of spruce, crossed another little hollow, rose to a sharp hillock, and started down a stony incline towards the broad valley that Barney had seen from the top of the ridge. The auto track did not show on the stones, but on every rise and fall of the road there were water-bars that held little pockets of mud, and through these the trail was clear. Barney heeded nothing else—neither the lights of the farmhouses, nor the barking of farm dogs, nor the cool accompaniment of an evening breeze that came ruffling and rustling through the grass and the foliage.

It was growing dark, and he was planning to use his electric lamp, when a dog rushed barking to the roadside from a little bungalow that looked out over the valley from the edge of the final descent. It was an aristocratic collie dog, and Barney growled at it, class-consciously. It worked itself into a nervous frenzy of vociferous disapproval of him. He hissed and spat at it like a cat, with the purpose of enticing it down the road to a place where some lilac bushes would hide him from the house. There he intended to "give it one in the ribs with a rock"; but as soon as the collie saw him stooping for the stone, it fled,

growling. He threw his stone at a convenient oak-tree—whose air of dignified indifference provoked the insult—and went on.

He was near the bottom of the hill when he crossed the muddy pocket of another water-bar and saw no auto trail in it. And his expression of idle mischief changed at once to a look of intent and crafty determination. He glanced behind him, to make sure that he was concealed from the cottage. Then he crawled through an old wire fence, into the woods on the opposite side of the road from the cottage, and disappeared, crouching, in the underbrush.

The dog, after some distantly defiant barks, fell silent. In a few moments, the whole hillside, relieved of Barney's disturbing presence, settled down into dim meditativeness, peacefully. The cottage was a simple, shingled bungalow, with a chimney of field stones that sent up a quiet curl of smoke; and it sat there, weather-browned and unpretentious, looking out over the valley, like an old woodsman in a wilderness serenely smoking his pipe. A hermit thrush began to sing its devotional roulades in the distance, and its song gave an interpretative voice to the grave and limpid beauty of the evening; and the scene held that song in its setting as harmoniously as the pale green sky above the sunset held the sparkle of the first star. Nothing could have looked less like the hiding place of a criminal mystery.

Darkness had settled down on peace, and the moon was rising on it, when Barney issued unexpectedly from the bushes and began to scuffle noisily up the road again to attract the collie. He had his coat over his arm, and when the dog came barking at him he swung the coat at it, and retreated trailing it, and flicked it into the dog's mouth when it pursued him. As soon as the collie had a fighting hold on it, he began to yell shrilly: "Here, you! Lea' me alone! Here! Leggo, will you? Here, you! Call off yer dog!" He pulled, and the dog pulled, backing into the gate; and when a man came running from the house to see what was the matter, the case against the dog

needed no telling. "Leggo my coat," Barney was panting. "I'll kick yer head off! Leggo, will yuh! Leggo!"

The man was Barney's suspect, without his Panama hat.

"Colin!" he cried. "Colin! Stop it, sir!" He caught the dog by the collar and cuffed it. Barney dropped his end of the coat. The man got it away from the dog as a woman ran out, in a kitchen apron, calling "What has happened, Charles? What is it?"

He replied: "Colin has attacked this boy."

"What for? What was he doing?"

"Search *me*," Barney answered. "He didn't say a word. He just jumped out an' grabbed me, an' I dodged, an' he got the coat."

The dog was barking protestingly, but he could not make himself understood.

"Bad dog!" the woman scolded him. "Go in the house, sir. You bad dog, you. Did he tear it?"

"I guess so," Barney said. "I heard it rip."

"Give it to me. I'll mend it. Oh, you bad dog. How dare you!" She took the coat and turned back to the house with it, driving the crestfallen dog before her.

"I hope he hasn't spoiled your coat," the man apologized. "I never knew him to do such a thing before." He added suspiciously: "I could have sworn he wouldn't attack any one—unless he was badly provoked."

"That's all right," Barney said. "If I'd seen him first, he wouldn't 'a' got me. I didn't notice him in the dark."

"What were you doing?"

"Mindin' my own bus'ness."

"Do you live around here?"

"Nope."

The man was scrutinizing him as well as he could in the faint moonlight, and Barney's manner resented the scrutiny.

"Where are you from?"

Barney did not answer.

"You're not a country boy."

"Never mind about *me*," Barney said. "Gi' me the coat an' I'll get along."

"You're from the city, aren't you?"

"What city?"

"New York."

Barney looked down at his feet, kicked at a tuft of grass in the path, and did not reply.

"What are you doing away out here?"

"Answerin' questions."

The man laughed. "What's the matter? Have you run away from home?"

"That's all right," Barney said. "I can take care o' myself. If you'll gi' me a glass o' milk er somethin', I'll call it square."

"There's a town just over the hill. Got any money?"

"Sure. I'm a millionaire. I'll split some wood fer you, if you'll gi' me some bread and butter."

"All the wood's split." He went down into his pocket and drew out a quarter.

Barney took it ungraciously. "What's the matter? Runnin' some sort o' joint in here?"

"What do you mean?"

"Well, first you got a dog that tries to chew me up, 'cause I come past the gate. An' then you stand me off fer a bite to eat, like you was afraid to——"

"Not at all," the man said hastily. "Come along. We can give you something to eat anyway." He started up the path and Barney followed him grudgingly.

"Sorry if I didn't seem quite hospitable," he said, in an attempt at jocularity. "We haven't any servant just at present, and my wife has to do the cooking. Sit down on the veranda here, till I speak to her."

"I on'y wanted some bread and butter—an' somethin' to drink."

"All right. Make yourself comfortable." He waved his hand at a wicker chair and a hickory rocker on the veranda. Barney chose the wicker chair.

There were no lights in this wing of the house, which overlooked the road. The only light that Barney had seen was shining on a bush from a distant window where some one was evidently busy in the kitchen; he could hear an occasional clatter of plates. Between him and the lighted

window, the whole house was dark, but he did not know who might be watching him from that darkness, so he kept his eyes off it, and settled himself wearily in the easy chair, and put his head back against the cushioned headrest, and showed no interest in anything.

They found him apparently asleep there, when they came back—the woman with a tray of food, the man with a green-shaded reading lamp. The light woke Barney. He sat up, rubbing his eyes. They placed a porch table before him and arranged on it the tray and the lamp.

"Pretty tired, eh?" the man said.

Barney nodded, his eyes on the food. He reached a slice of buttered bread before the tray was on the table, and proceeded to "wolf" it. He did not look at his hosts. The lamp on the table shone full on him, and left them in obscurity. He pretended to be hungrily unconscious of their amused scrutiny. When they spoke to him he answered with nods, his mouth full, his eyes scouting eagerly ahead of his appetite.

The man sat down on the edge of the veranda, smoking his pipe. The woman cut the top off a boiled egg, poured Barney's tea for him, and put cream and sugar in it. Then she drew up the hickory rocker beside the lamp and applied herself to the sewing of his coat, while the man began to sound and examine him with mildly humorous hints and queries.

Barney did not need to invent the story which he allowed them to draw out of him. It was the story of a boy whom he had known in Hudson Street—a motherless newsboy whose drunken father used to beat him regularly, to make him give up the money he earned. He ran away and lived on the streets, supporting himself. Then the father put the police after him; and he was arrested and sentenced to the Reform School, but his sentence was suspended on condition that he gave up his "bumming" and remained at home. When he could endure it no longer, he fled again; but this time, to escape the New York police, he went tramping; and Hudson Street heard no more of him.

Barney's manner accepted such a father as a natural fact of life, without any emotional embellishment or indignant comment. The woman put down her sewing, and poured him another cup of tea, and eyed him in silent pity. She was a capable-looking young housewife, of a prettily maternal aspect; and Barney's face and hands needed washing.

The man showed his sympathy by asking: "What do you intend to do? How do you expect to make a living?"

"Search *me,*" Barney said. "I'll strike a town somewhere, an' sell papers, er shine shoes, I guess."

The collie dog sat watching him distrustfully, until he shared a slice of bread with it. He did so with the secret thought that he would have to "get next" to that dog if he was to do any sleuthing on the premises; but he was aware of the glance that the couple exchanged when they saw him so forgive his enemy out of a natural kindness of heart.

The dog seemed less touched than they.

The man asked: "Where are you going to spend the night?"

Barney answered: "I thought maybe yuh'd let me bunk in yer hayloft."

He looked doubtfully at his wife. "We haven't any hayloft," he said.

She put in: "He could have the maid's room—over the kitchen."

"Yes. I suppose he could."

"I'll make it up," she said.

She left them. After a moment's silence, the man followed her. And when they were gone, Barney turned to make a face, tauntingly, at the dog.

He was sure, from their manner, that there was some concealment of guilt in the house; and he was satisfied that he could find out what it was, before morning, if they let him spend the night under their roof.

When they returned, he was apparently half-asleep again, and he mumbled a prompt acceptance of the woman's proposal that he should go to bed at once. She

led him around the front of the house to the kitchen porch, and the kitchen light was still the only one to be seen. Of the kitchen itself he looked only at the doors. One that was closed evidently led to the dining-room and the rest of the house; one that was open showed the stairs to the upper floor; a third was the back door to the yard; a fourth under the staircase might be the door of a pantry.

She lighted a candle and ushered him upstairs to a tiny room that had a sloping ceiling, a single window in the gable end, and no door except the door to the stairs. At that side of the room in which there should have been a door communicating with the other rooms of the upper floor, there was a blank partition-wall of rough plaster. It was a satisfactory arrangement for isolating a servant from the family privacies in a small house, but it did not appeal to Barney. He had counted on being able, from the upper hall, to spy on whatever was being done below stairs.

The room was bare and clean, with no furniture but an iron cot, a kitchen chair, a sort of camp wash-stand, and a little dresser. "I'm afraid we haven't any night clothes that will fit you," she said, putting down the candle.

Barney replied ungraciously: "I'd be asleep 'fore I could get into 'em anyway." He did not wish to encourage her in any solicitude concerning him; it might prove embarrassing if she came back to see that he was sleeping comfortably. He sat down on the side of the bed and began to unlace his shoes.

She accepted her dismissal. "Good-night," she said. "We have breakfast about seven. I'll call you."

He mumbled "G'night." He dropped his shoe heavily on the floor as she descended; and though she closed the door at the foot of the stairs, and he could not hear her in the kitchen, he dropped the other shoe as noisily when he got it off. Then he stripped to his undershirt and trousers, blew out the light, threw himself heavily on the bed in the hope that its creaking would be audible, and lay on his back listening.

He listened and listened, but he could hear nothing, except the incessant stridulant drone of insect mechanisms out-of-doors.

He sat up to look out the window, and there was nothing to be seen but leaves and moonlight.

He crawled to the sill in the hope that there might be the roof of a lean-to below the window. There was none. And the moon was so bright that he could not have climbed out with any safety in any case. And there would be the dog to betray him, even if there had been no moon.

He got his little electric lamp from his hip-pocket and tiptoed to the stairs. A cautious flash showed him the door below him. He descended, in the darkness, with infinite precautions, waiting and listening after every movement. There was no sound from the kitchen. And when he had lifted the latch and opened the door an inch or two, there was no light to be seen, except the moonlight that came through the kitchen windows. He shut the door behind him, to leave no evidence of his passage in case his retreat were intercepted and he had to hide downstairs. He moved inch by inch towards the closed door of the dining-room. He saw a faint crack of light beneath it.

They were in there, then. If he could get that door open, perhaps he could hear them. He approached it stealthily. He raised his hand to the latch. A low growl checked him.

It was the dog, in the dining-room. It had scented him. It began to bark. Some one called to it from the other end of the house; and Barney fled.

But he did not flee upstairs; that would have been a final confession of failure. He made for the pantry door that he had noticed—intending to hide until the alarm had subsided—and when he plucked the door open, he found himself at the head of cellar steps. He went down them swiftly by the light of the pocket lamp, and stood waiting at the bottom, in the darkness, looking up, listening breathlessly, ready to retreat further if he heard any one coming. He was enjoying it like a game. In case he

was caught, he had a story ready, to the effect that he had been too hungry to sleep, so he had sneaked downstairs to smouch something from the pantry.

In the cool underground silence, he found that not only could he hear the growling dog as clearly as before, but he could hear much more clearly the distant voice calling, "Be quiet, sir! Be quiet! What has got into that dog to-night?"

He flashed a furtive light around him; he was in a little food cellar of hanging shelves and larder cupboards. He saw an open door that led through a stone foundation-wall into another part of the basement. And it was from this direction that the muffled angry voice seemed to come.

He sneaked to that door as softly as a cat, barefooted on the cement floor. The dog was quiet again. In the doorway he could hear a distinguishable murmur of several voices sounding through the thin floor above and ahead of him. He stood there, grinning to himself in the darkness, at the end of his hunt.

He had them.

It was the man and two women, and he could hear them distinctly when he had picked his way to the farther end of the cellar, across the clutter of lumber and garden tools and packing-cases and discarded furniture—misering the flashes of his lantern for fear some cellar window might betray a sight of him. And the first words that he heard connectedly, gave him the solution of the Baxter mystery.

"But my dear Bessie," the man was arguing, "if your father got your letter, why should he offer this reward? There's no sense in it. He *can't* have got it."

A girlish voice answered: "Yes. He did. I know why he's doing it, but I can't explain without being unfair to Dad."

The woman murmured something reproachfully. The man began to move, heavy-footed, around the room. "Did you tell him where you were?"

"No. I simply told him not to worry about me—that I'd be all right."

"Well, if he got the letter, he's concealing it from the detectives, isn't he?"

"I suppose so. Yes."

The man sat down, with a bump. "I suppose you know what you're doing, but I'll be hanged if I can see any sense in it. I'm not thinking of myself, but if you're found *here*——"

"Well," she said, "I'll go somewhere else, then."

There were confused words of remonstrance, of angrily apologetic explanation and self-defense, of affectionate reassurance. Out of it all, the girl's voice rose impatiently: "Well, Dad's doing it to deceive Mr. Huntley. That's why he's doing it. He's in a—he's in trouble—money troubles. And he couldn't refuse his consent to our marriage—to Mr. Huntley. And *I* couldn't refuse to marry him, either—without making it worse for Dad. That's why I got engaged to him, in the first place—to get him to help Dad. And don't you think Dad tried to force me to, either—or even asked me to—for he didn't. And when I saw he wasn't going to help Dad till after we'd be married—and he wouldn't help him at all if I backed out of it—I—well, I 'disappeared.' And Dad's just pretending he thinks I've been kidnapped, so as to hold Huntley. And Huntley's paying the detectives, and all the rest of it. People think we're rich, but Dad's lost everything, and we haven't a cent, and unless Mr. Huntley helps him through with this scheme of his, I don't know what will become of him."

She had begun to sob, and the conversation became an incoherent jumble of voices, consoling her, sympathizing with her, reassuring her. Barney did not wait to hear it out. He had heard enough to satisfy himself. It was Elizabeth Baxter. She was hiding there. And overcome with a superstitious fear that now, at the very moment of success, something might happen to betray him and spoil it all, he started back to his room on tiptoe, holding his breath.

That fear did not leave him till he had regained his room safely. There he allowed himself only an excited

chuckle as he slipped off his trousers and hopped into bed in his undershirt. He gave his pillow a jubilant thump and butted his head down into it, hugging himself. Wait till he saw the Boss! Then he lay perfectly still, curled up in the cool sheets with his secret, smiling ecstatically. He could go downstairs in the morning, eat his breakfast in all innocence, and say good-by without letting them suspect anything, and slouch off up the road with his coat over his shoulder, on his travels again. And as soon as he was out of their sight he would "beat it" to Findellen, catch the first train to New York, and come dawdling nonchalantly into the Babbing Bureau to report to the Boss that he had found Elizabeth Baxter!

He fell asleep while he was dramatizing that scene with Babbing—after he had worked Babbing up to such heights of admiration of his cleverness that the scene was already too heart-tickling to be anything but a dream itself.

In the morning, everything happened very much as he had planned. After breakfasting in the kitchen, he got away without betraying himself to any one but the dog, at whom he winked triumphantly as he departed. He made short work of the road of Findellen, thanks to a passing farm wagon that give him a lift. He arrived at the railroad station only a few minutes before a train full of commuters returning to New York for their day's work. And when he looked down from the bow of the ferry at the sky-line of the city, he found it quite as he had pictured it, except that it showed no excited appreciation of the change that had come, over night, to the status of the Baxter case.

His interview with Babbing was the only event that did not work out as he had expected. Babbing was walking up and down his private office, thoughtfully, when Barney entered to see him. He asked, at once, "Where have you been?" but without looking at Barney, and without stopping in his walk.

Barney closed the door. "I been searchin' fer this Elizabeth Baxter—an' I found her."

Babbing continued with his thoughts. It was some time before he asked, almost absent-mindedly, "Where?"

"Out near a place called Findellen, livin' with some folks she knows."

"What took you out there?"

Barney described his expedition, from the moment that he had sold a newspaper to the man in the Panama hat, down to the successful issue of his adventure, when he had stood in the cellar of the bungalow and heard Elizabeth Baxter overhead.

Babbing had seated himself at his desk, in his swivel chair, but he had turned aside from Barney with his eyes on the window, noncommittally. Barney, standing before the desk, with a hand on a chair-back, like a boy before his teacher, went from assured eagerness to uneasy apprehension as he talked. He looked anxiously at Babbing's plump inscrutable profile when he had finished. There seemed to be something wrong.

Babbing asked: "What do you mean by 'a hunch'?"

"Well, gee," Barney said, "the minute I saw that guy readn' the paper, I knew he was wise to somethin'——"

"You *knew* it? How?"

"I—don't know. I guessed he was."

"What were you doing when he came up to you?"

"Watchin' fer the Brooklyn fellah."

"What were you thinking about?"

"I—I dunno."

"As a matter of fact, you weren't thinking of anything, were you? Mind perfectly blank?"

Barney did not answer, and Babbing wheeled around in the chair to face him. As their eyes met, Barney turned pale.

"Got another hunch, have you?" Babbing said fiercely.

Barney stiffened to meet the shock.

"You're fired," Babbing said. "Sit down."

Barney stumbled and sat down weakly in the chair.

"You're fired for leaving your post without permission."

Barney pleaded chokingly: "Well, gee, Chief——"

Babbing stopped him with a gesture.

"I'm going to see this man Baxter, privately. He has concluded a consolidation of water power companies out West and Huntley is president of the new concern. It's in the morning papers. Now, if what you overheard is true, he'll pay the five thousand dollars' reward as soon as he understands that we claim the money without making public anything about the case—even to Huntley. Understand?"

Barney had heard, confusedly, but he had not understood. He had been trying to gulp down a constriction in his throat.

Babbing nodded at him grimly. "I'm willing that half of this money should go to you. You're wasting your time here. What you need more than anything else, just now, is an education. Twenty-five hundred dollars will pay your way for a year or two——"

"I—I don't want it, Chief. I want to——"

"It doesn't matter what you want. You're discharged from this office and you can't come back until you've learned to read and write and *speak* English."

Barney's heart began to beat again. "Will you take me *back?*"

"If you want to come—then—yes. Glad to have you."

"Well, gee, Chief——" Barney was smiling, almost in tears.

Babbing continued quizzically, settling back in his chair. "You have the making of a detective in you, I'm sorry to say. There's no doubt of it. And if you want to make a living out of it, I can't stop you. It's as good a way as another, I suppose. You either have the aptitude for it, or you haven't. It isn't a science. It's an art. You can't reduce it to rules. It's intuitive. All the science in the business can't take the place of the 'hunch.' That's why I'm discharging you. If you can get the right hunch, all you need is an education in order to make a success of yourself. Understand?"

"Yes, 'r," Barney beamed.

"Very well, then," Babbing rose. "Go home and tell your mother. I'll be around to see her to-night, after I've

settled with Baxter. I'll arrange with her about your schooling."

"How long will it be?"

"How long will what be?"

"Before I can come back?"

"That depends on how you apply yourself to your studies."

"Gee," Barney said, "I'll 'ply myself all right."

"Good," Babbing held out his hand. "Good-by meanwhile. And good luck."

Barney shook hands shyly. "Thanks, Chief. The same to you."

"All right. Run along now."

Barney hurried obediently to the door. "I'll be back," he grinned, "before you miss me—wit' a leather medal."

"If you come back wit' dat Bowery accent," Babbing said, to a letter that he had opened, "I'll throw you out the window. Get out of here."

And Barney went, giggling, with his very ambiguous past happy behind him, and his equally ambiguous future very promising before.

BARONESS ORCZY

THE MYSTERY OF THE PEARL NECKLACE

THE Old Man in the Corner had a very curious theory about that mysterious affair of the pearl necklace, and though it all occurred a few years ago, I am tempted to put his deductions down on record, because, as far as I know, neither the police of this or any other country, nor the public, have ever found a satisfactory solution for what was undoubtedly a strange and mystifying adventure.

I remembered the case quite well when first he spoke to me about it one afternoon in what had become my favourite tea-haunt in Fleet Street; the only thing I was not quite certain of was the identity of the august personage to whom the pearl necklace was to be presented. I did know, of course, that she belonged to one of the reigning families of Europe and that she had been an active and somewhat hot-headed and bitter opponent of the Communist movement in her own country, in consequence of which both she and her exalted husband had been the object of more than one murderous attack by the other side.

It was on the occasion of the august lady's almost miraculous escape from a peculiarly well-planned and brutal assault that a number of ladies in England subscribed the sum of fifteen thousand pounds for the purchase of an exquisite pearl necklace to be presented to her as a congratulatory gift.

Rightly or wrongly, the donors of this princely gift feared that a certain well-known political organisation on the Continent would strive by every means in its power,

(From "Unravelled Knots," by Baroness Orczy. Copyright, 1926, by George H. Doran Company, New York.)

fair or foul, to prevent this token of English good-will from reaching the recipient, and also, as it chanced to happen, there had been during the past few months a large number of thefts of valuables on Continental railways, and it became a question who should be entrusted by the committee of subscribers with the perilous risk of taking the necklace over for presentation; the trouble being further enhanced by the fact that in those days the Insurance Companies barred one or two European countries from their comprehensive policies against theft and petty larceny, and that it was to one of those countries thus barred that the bearer of the fifteen thousand pound necklace would have to journey.

Imagine the excitement, the anxiety, which reigned in the hearts of the thousands of middle-class English women who had subscribed their mite to the gift! Their committee sat behind closed doors discussing the claims of various volunteers who were ready to undertake the journey: these worthy folk were quite convinced that certain well-known leaders of anarchical organisations would be on the lookout for the booty and would have special facilities for the theft of it at the frontier during the course of those endless customs and passport formalities for which that particular country was ever famous.

Finally the committee's choice fell upon a certain Captain Arthur Saunders, nephew of Sir Montague Bowden, who was chairman of the ladies' committee. Captain Saunders had, it seems, travelled abroad a great deal, and his wife was foreign—Swedish so it was understood; it was thought that if he went abroad now in the company of his wife, the object of their journey might be thought to be a visit to Mrs. Saunders's relations, and the conveying of the pearl necklace to its destination might thus remain more or less a secret.

The choice was approved of by all the subscribers, and it was decided that Captain and Mrs. Saunders should start by the ten a.m. train for Paris on the sixteenth of March. Captain Saunders was to call the previous after-

noon at a certain bank in Charing Cross, where the necklace was deposited, and there receive it as an almost sacred trust from the hands of the manager. Further, it was arranged that Mrs. Saunders should, immediately on arrival in Paris, send a wire to Mrs. Berners, a great friend of hers who was the secretary of the committee, and in fact that she should keep the committee informed of Captain Saunders's well-being at all the more important points of the journey.

And thus they started.

But no news came from Paris on the sixteenth. At first no anxiety was felt on that score, every one being ready to surmise that the Calais-Paris train had been late in, and that the Saunderses had perhaps only barely time to clear their luggage at the customs and catch the train de luxe which would take them on, via Cologne, without a chance of sending the promised telegram. But soon after midday of the seventeenth, Sir Montague Bowden had a wire from Mrs. Saunders from Paris saying: "Arthur disappeared since last night. Desperately anxious. Please come at once. Have booked room for you here. Mary. Hotel Majestic."

The news was terrifying; however, Sir Montague Bowden, with commendable zeal, at once wired to Mary announcing his immediate departure for Paris, and as it was then too late for him to catch the afternoon Continental train, he started by the evening one, travelling all night and arriving at the Hotel Majestic in the early morning.

As soon as he had had a bath and some breakfast he went in search of information. He found that the French police already had the "affaire" in hand, but that they had not so far the slightest clue to the mysterious disappearance of le Capitaine Saunders. He found the management of the Majestic in a state of offended dignity, and Mrs. Saunders in one that verged on hysteria, but fortunately, he also found at the hotel a Mr. Haasberg, brother of Mrs. Saunders, a Swedish business man of remarkable coolness and clearness of judgment, who promptly put him *au fait* with what had occurred.

It seems that Mr. Haasberg was settled in business in Paris, and that he had hoped to catch a glimpse of his sister and brother-in-law on the evening of the sixteenth at the Gare du Nord on their way through to the East, but that on that very morning he had received a telegram from Mary asking him to book a couple of rooms—a bedroom and a sitting-room—for one night for them at the Hotel Majestic. This Mr. Haasberg did, glad enough that he would see something more of his sister than he had been led to hope.

On the afternoon of the sixteenth he was kept late at business, and was unable to meet the Saunderses at the station, but towards nine o'clock he walked round to the Majestic, hoping to find them in. Their room was on the third floor. Mr. Haasberg went up in the lift, and as soon as he reached No. 301 he became aware of a buzz of conversation coming from within, which, however, ceased as soon as he had pushed open the door.

On entering the room he saw that Captain Saunders had a visitor, a tall, thick-set man, who wore an old-fashioned, heavy moustache and large, gold-rimmed spectacles. At sight of Mr. Haasberg the man clapped his hat—a bowler—on his head, pulled his coat-collar over his ears, and with a hasty: "Well, s'long, old man. I'll wait till to-morrow!" spoken with a strong foreign accent, he walked rapidly out of the room and down the corridor.

Haasberg stood for a moment in the doorway to watch the disappearing personage, but he did this without any ulterior motive or thought of suspicion; then he turned back into the room and greeted his brother-in-law.

Saunders seemed to Haasberg to be nervous and ill-at-ease; in response to the latter's inquiry after Mary, he explained that she had remained in her room as he had a man to see on business. Haasberg made some casual remark about this visitor, and then Mary Saunders came in. She, too, appeared troubled and agitated, and as soon as she had greeted her brother, she turned to her husband and asked very eagerly:

"Well, has he gone?"

Saunders, giving a significant glance in Haasberg's direction, replied with an obvious effort at indifference:

"Yes, yes, he's gone. But he said he would be back to-morrow."

At which Mary seemed to give a sigh of relief.

Scenting some uncomfortable mystery, Haasberg questioned her, and also Saunders, about their visitor, but could not elicit any satisfactory explanation.

"Oh, there is nothing mysterious about old Pasquier," was all that either of them would say.

"He is an old pal of Arthur's," Mary added lightly, "but he is such an awful bore that I got Arthur to say that I was out, so that he might get rid of him more quickly."

Somehow Haasberg felt that these explanations were very lame. He could not get it out of his head that there was something mysterious about the visitor, and knowing the purpose of the Saunderses' journey, he thought it as well to give them a very serious word of warning about Continental hotels generally, and to suggest that they should, after this stay in Paris, go straight through in the train de luxe and never halt again until the fifteen thousand pound necklace was safely in the hands of the august lady for whom it was intended. But both Arthur and Mary laughed at these words of warning.

"My dear fellow," Arthur said, seemingly rather in a huff, "we are not such mugs as you think us. Mary and I have travelled on the Continent at least as much as you have, and are fully alive to the dangers attendant upon our mission. As a matter of fact, the moment we arrived, I gave the necklace in its own padlocked tin box, just as I brought it over from England, in charge of the hotel management, who immediately locked it up in their strong-room, so even if good old Pasquier had designs on it—which I can assure you he has not—he would stand no chance of getting hold of it. And now, sit down, there's a good chap, and talk of something else."

Only half reassured, Haasberg sat down and had a chat. But he did not stay long. Mary was obviously tired, and

soon said good-night. Arthur offered to accompany his brother-in-law to the latter's lodgings in the Rue de Moncigny.

"I would like a walk," he said, "before going to bed."

So the two men walked out together, and Haasberg finally said good-night to Arthur just outside his own lodgings. It was then close upon ten o'clock. The little party had agreed to spend the next day together, as the train de luxe did not go until the evening, and Haasberg had promised to take a holiday from business. Before going to bed he attended to some urgent correspondence, and had just finished a letter when his telephone bell rang. To his horror he heard his sister's voice speaking.

"Don't keep Arthur up so late, Herman," she said. "I am dog tired, and can't go to sleep until he returns."

"Arthur?" he replied. "But Arthur left me at my door two hours ago!"

"He has not returned," she insisted, "and I am getting anxious."

"Of course you are, but he can't be long now. He must have turned into a café and forgot the time. Do ring me up as soon as he comes in."

Unable to rest, however, and once more vaguely anxious, Haasberg went hastily back to the Majestic. He found Mary nearly distracted with anxiety, and as he himself felt anything but reassured, he did not know how to comfort her.

At one time he went down into the hall to ascertain whether anything was known in the hotel about Saunders's movements earlier in the evening; but at this hour of the night there were only the night porter and the watchman about, and they knew nothing of what had occurred before they came on duty.

There was nothing for it but to await the morning as calmly as possible. This was difficult enough, as Mary Saunders was evidently in a terrible state of agitation. She was quite certain that something tragic had happened to her husband, but Haasberg tried in vain to get her to speak of the mysterious visitor who had from the first aroused

his own suspicions. Mary persisted in asserting that the visitor was just an old pal of Arthur's and that no suspicion of any kind could possibly rest upon him.

In the early morning Haasberg went off to the nearest commissariat of police. They took the matter in hand without delay, and within the hour had obtained some valuable information from the personnel of the hotel. To begin with, it was established that at about ten minutes past ten the previous evening, that is to say a quarter of an hour or so after Haasberg had parted from Arthur Saunders outside his own lodgings, the latter had returned to the Majestic, and at once asked for the tin box which he had deposited in the bureau. There was some difficulty in acceding to his request, because the clerk who was in charge of the keys of the strong-room could not at once be found. However, M. le Capitaine was so insistent that search was made for the clerk, who presently appeared with the keys, and after the usual formalities, handed over the tin box to Saunders, who signed a receipt for it in the book. Haasberg had since then identified the signature which was quite clear and incontestable.

Saunders then went upstairs, refusing to take the lift, and five minutes later he came down again, nodded to the hall porter, and went out of the hotel. No one had seen him since, but during the course of the morning, the valet on the fourth floor had found an empty tin box in the gentlemen's cloak-room. This box was produced, and to her unutterable horror Mary Saunders recognised it as the one which had held the pearl necklace.

The whole of this evidence as it gradually came to light was a staggering blow both to Mary and to Haasberg himself, because until this moment neither of them had thought that the necklace was in jeopardy: they both believed that it was safely locked up in the strong-room of the hotel.

Haasberg now feared the worst. He blamed himself terribly for not having made more certain of the mysterious visitor's identity. He had not yet come to the point of accusing his brother-in-law in his mind of a conspiracy

to steal the necklace, but frankly, at this stage, he did not know what to think. Saunders's conduct had—to say the least—been throughout extremely puzzling. Why had he elected to spend the night in Paris, when all arrangements had been made for him and his wife to travel straight through? Who was the mysterious visitor with the walrus moustache, vaguely referred to by both Arthur and Mary as "old Pasquier"? And above all why had Arthur withdrawn the necklace from the hotel strong-room where it was quite safe, and, with it in his pocket, walked about the streets of Paris at that hour of the night?

Haasberg was quite convinced that "old Pasquier" knew something about the whole affair, but, strangely enough, Mary persisted in asserting that he was quite harmless and an old friend of Arthur's who was beyond suspicion. When further pressed with questions, she declared that she had no idea where the man lodged, and that, in fact, she believed that he had left Paris the self-same evening *en route* for Brussels, where he was settled in business.

Enquiry amongst the personnel of the hotel revealed the fact that Captain Saunders's visitor had been seen by the hall porter when he came soon after half-past eight, and asked whether le Capitaine Saunders had finished dinner; his question being answered in the affirmative, he went upstairs, refusing to take the lift. Half an hour or so later he was seen by one of the waiters in the lounge hurriedly crossing the hall, and finally by the two boys in attendance at the swing doors when he went out of the hotel. All agreed that the man was very tall and thick-set, that he wore a heavy moustache and a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles. He had on a bowler hat and an overcoat with the collar pulled right up to his ears. The hall porter, who himself spoke English fairly well, was under the impression that the man was not English, although he made his enquiries in that language.

In addition to all these investigations, the commissaire de police, on his second visit to the hotel, was able to assure Haasberg that all the commissariats in and around Paris had been communicated with by telephone so as to

ascertain whether any man answering to Saunders's description had been injured during the night in a street accident, and taken in somewhere for shelter; also that a description of the necklace had already been sent round to all the *Monts-de-Piété* throughout the country. The police were also sharply on the lookout for the man with the walrus moustache, but so far without success.

And Mary Saunders obstinately persisted in her denial of any knowledge about him. "Arthur," she said, "sometimes saw 'old Pasquier' in London"; but she did not know anything about him, neither what his nationality was, nor where he lodged. She did not know when he had left London, nor where he could be found in Paris. All that she knew, so she said, was that his name was Pasquier, and that he was in business in Brussels; she therefore concluded that he was Belgian.

Even to her own brother she would not say more, although he succeeded in making her understand how strange her attitude must appear both to the police and to her friends, and what harm she was doing to her husband, but at this she burst into floods of tears and swore that she knew nothing about Pasquier's whereabouts, and that she believed him to be innocent of any attempt to steal the necklace or to injure Arthur.

There was nothing more to be said for the present and Haasberg sent the telegram in his sister's name to Sir Montague Bowden because he felt that some one less busy than himself should look after the affair and be a comfort to Mary, whose mental condition appeared pitiable in the extreme.

In this first interview he was able to assure Sir Montague that everything had been done to trace the whereabouts of Arthur Saunders, and also of the necklace of which the unfortunate man had been the custodian; and it was actually while the two men were talking the whole case over that Haasberg received an intimation from the police that they believed the missing man had been found: at any rate would Monsieur give himself the trouble to come round to the commissariat at once.

This, of course, Haasberg did, accompanied by Sir Montague, and at the commissariat to their horror they found the unfortunate Saunders in a terrible condition. Briefly the commissaire explained to them that about a quarter past ten last night an *agent de police,* making his rounds, saw a man crouching in the angle of a narrow blind alley that leads out of the Rue de Moncigny. On being shaken up by the agent the man struggled to his feet, but he appeared quite dazed and unable to reply to any questions that were put to him. He was then conveyed to the nearest commissariat, where he spent the night.

He was obviously suffering from loss of memory, and could give no account of himself, nor were any papers of identification found upon him, not even a visiting card, but close behind him, on the pavement where he was crouching, the *agent* had picked up a handkerchief which was saturated with chloroform. The handkerchief bore the initials A.S. The man, of course, was Arthur Saunders. What had happened to him it was impossible to ascertain. He certainly did not appear to be physically hurt, although from time to time when Mr. Haasberg or Sir Montague tried to question him, he passed his hand across the back of his head, and an expression of pathetic puzzlement came into his eyes.

His two friends, after the usual formalities of identification, were allowed to take him back to the Hotel Majestic where he was restored to the arms of his anxious wife; the English doctor, hastily summoned, could not find any trace of injury about the body, only the head appeared rather tender when touched. The doctor's theory was that Saunders had probably been sandbagged first, and then rendered more completely insensible by means of the chloroformed handkerchief, and that excitement, anxiety and the blow on the head had caused temporary loss of memory which quitetude and good nursing would soon put right.

In the meanwhile, of the fifteen thousand pound necklace there was not the slightest trace.

Unfortunately the disappearance of so valuable a piece of jewellery was one of those cases that could not be kept from public knowledge. The matter was of course in the hands of the French police and they had put themselves in communication with their English confrères, and the consternation—not to say the indignation—amongst the good ladies who had subscribed the money for the gift to the august lady was unbounded.

Everybody was blaming everybody else; the choice of Captain Saunders as the accredited messenger was now severely criticised; pointed questions were asked as to his antecedents, as to his wife's foreign relations, and it was soon found that very little was known about either.

Of course everybody knew that he was Sir Montague Bowden's nephew, and that, thanks to his uncle's influence, he har obtained a remunerative and rather important post in the office of one of the big Insurance Companies. But what his career had been before that no one knew. Some people said that he had fought in South Africa and later on had been correspondent for one of the great dailies during the Russo-Japanese war; although there seemed no doubt that he had been something of a rolling stone.

Rather tardily the committee was taken severely to task for having entrusted so important a mission to a man who was either a coward or a thief, or both, for at first no one doubted that Saunders had met a confederate in Paris and had handed over the necklace to him, whilst he himself enacted a farce of being waylaid, chloroformed and robbed, and subsequently of losing his memory.

But presently another version of the mystery was started by some amateur detective, and it found credence with quite a good many people. This was that Sir Montague Bowden had connived at the theft with Mrs. Saunders's relations; that the man with the walrus moustache did not exist at all or was in very truth a harmless old friend of Captain Saunders, and that it was Haasberg who had induced his brother-in-law to withdraw

the necklace from the hotel strong-room and to bring it to the Rue de Moncigny; that in fact it was that same perfidious Swede who had waylaid the credulous Englishman, chloroformed and robbed him of the precious necklace.

In the meanwhile the police in England had, of course, been communicated with by their French confrères, but before they could move in the matter or enjoin discretion on all concerned, an enterprising young man on the staff of the *Express Post* had interviewed Miss Elizabeth Spicer, who was the parlour-maid at the Saunderses' flat in Sloane Street.

That young lady, it seems, had something to say about a gentleman named Pasquier, who was not an infrequent visitor at the flat. She described him as a fine, tall gentleman, who wore large gold-rimmed spectacles, and a full military moustache. It seems that the last time Miss Elizabeth saw him was two days before her master and mistress's departure for abroad. Mr. Pasquier called late that evening and stayed till past ten o'clock. When Elizabeth was rung for in order to show him out, he was saying good-bye to the captain in the hall, and she heard him say, "in his funny foreign way," as she put it:

"Well, I shall be in Paris as soon as you. Tink it over, my friend."

And on the top of that came a story told by Henry Tidy, Sir Montague Bowden's butler. According to him Captain Saunders called at Sir Montague Bowden's house in Lowndes Street on the afternoon of the fifteenth. The two gentlemen remained closeted together in the library for nearly an hour, when Tidy was summoned to show the visitor out. Sir Montague, it seems, went to the front door with his nephew, and as the latter finally wished him good-bye, Sir Montague said to him:

"My dear boy, you can take it from me that there's nothing to worry about, and in any case I am afraid that it is too late to make any fresh arrangements."

"It's because of Mary," the captain rejoined. "She has made herself quite ill over it."

"The journey will do her good," Sir Montague went on pleasantly, "but if I were you I would have a good talk with your brother-in-law. He must know his Paris well. Take my advice and spend the night at the Majestic. You can always get rooms there."

This conversation Tidy heard quite distinctly, and he related the whole incident both to the journalist and to the police. After that the amateur investigators of crime were divided into two camps: there were those who persisted in thinking that Pasquier and Saunders, and probably Mrs. Saunders also, had conspired together to steal the necklace, and that Saunders had acted the farce of being waylaid and robbed, and losing his memory; they based their deductions on Elizabeth Spicer's evidence and on Mary Saunders's extraordinary persistence in trying to shield the mysterious Pasquier.

But other people, getting hold of Henry Tidy's story, deduced from it that it was indeed Sir Montague Bowden who had planned the whole thing in conjunction with Haasberg, since it was he who had persuaded Saunders to spend the night in Paris, thus giving his accomplice the opportunity of assaulting Saunders and stealing the necklace. To these wiseacres "old Pasquier" was indeed a harmless old pal of Arthur's, whose presence that evening at the Majestic was either a fable invented by Haasberg, or one quite innocent in purpose. In vain did Sir Montague try to explain away Tidy's evidence. Arthur, he said, had certainly called upon him that last afternoon, but what he seemed worried about was his wife's health; he feared that she would not be strong enough to undertake the long journey without a break, so Sir Montague advised him to spend the night in Paris and in any case to talk the matter over with Mary's brother.

The conversation overheard by Tidy could certainly admit of this explanation, but it did not satisfy the many amateur detectives who preferred to see a criminal in the chairman of the committee rather than a harmless old gentleman, as eager as themselves to find a solution to the mystery. And while people argued and wrangled there

was no news of the necklace, and none of the man with the walrus moustache. No doubt that worthy had by now shaved off his hirsute adornment and grown a beard. He had certainly succeeded in evading the police; whether he had gone to Brussels or succeeded in crossing the German frontier no one could say, his disappearance certainly bore out the theory of his being the guilty party with the connivance of Saunders, as against the Bowden-Haasberg theory.

As for the necklace it had probably been already taken to pieces and the pearls would presently be disposed of one by one to some unscrupulous Continental dealers, when the first hue and cry after them had died away.

Captain Saunders was said to be slowly recovering from his loss of memory and subsequent breakdown. Every one at home was waiting to hear what explanation he would give of his amazing conduct in taking the necklace out of the hotel strong-room late that night and sallying forth with it into the streets of Paris at that hour. The explanation came after about a fortnight of suspense in a letter from Mary to her friend Mrs. Berners.

Arthur, she said, had told her that on the fateful evening, after he parted from Mr. Haasberg in the Rue de Moncigny, he had felt restless and anxious about what the latter had told him on the subject of foreign hotels, and he was suddenly seized with the idea that the necklace was not safe in the care of the management of the Majestic, because there would come a moment when he would have to claim the tin box, and this would probably be handed over to him when the hall of the hotel was crowded, and the eyes of expert thieves would then follow his every movement. Therefore he went back to the hotel, claimed the tin box, and as the latter was large and cumbersome he got rid of it in one of the cloak-rooms of the hotel, slipped the necklace, in its velvet case, in the pocket of his overcoat, and went out with the intention of asking Haasberg to take care of it for him, and only to hand it back to him when on the following evening the train de luxe was on the point of starting. He had been in

sight of Haasberg's lodgings when, without the slightest warning, a dull blow on the black of his head, coming he knew not whence, robbed of him of consciousness.

This explanation, however, was voted almost unanimously to be very lame, and it was, on the whole, as well that the Saunderses had decided to remain abroad for a time. The ladies especially—and above all those who had put their money together for the necklace—were very bitter against him. On the other hand Sir Montague Bowden was having a very rough time of it; he had already had one or two very unpleasant word-tussles with some outspoken friends of his, and there was talk of a slander action that would certainly be a *cause célèbre* when it came on.

Thus the arguments went on in endless succession until one day—well do I remember the excitement that spread throughout the town as soon as the incident became known—there was a terrible row in one of the big clubs in Piccadilly. Sir Montague Bowden was insulted by one of his fellow members: he was called a thief, and asked what share he was getting out of the sale of the necklace. Of course the man who spoke in this unwarranted fashion was drunk at the time, but nevertheless it was a terrible position for Sir Montague, because as his opponent grew more and more abusive and he himself more and more indignant, he realised that he had practically no friends who would stand by him in the dispute. Some of the members tried to stop the row, and others appeared indifferent, but no one sided with him, or returned abuse for abuse on his behalf.

It was in the very midst of this most unedifying scene—one perhaps unparalleled in the annals of London club life—that a club servant entered the room, and handed a telegram to Sir Montague Bowden.

Even the most sceptical there, and those whose brains were almost fuddled with the wrangling and the noise, declared afterwards that a mysterious Providence had ordained that the telegram should arrive at that precise moment. It had been sent to Sir Montague's private house

in Lowndes Street; his secretary had opened it and sent it on to the club. As soon as Sir Montague had mastered its contents he communicated them to the members of the club, and it seems that there never had been such excitement displayed in any assembly of sober Englishmen as was shown in that club room on this momentous occasion.

The telegram had come all the way from the other end of Europe, and had been sent by the august lady in whose hands the priceless necklace, about which there was so much pother in England and France, had just been safely placed. It ran thus:

"Deeply touched by exquisite present just received through kind offices of Captain Saunders, from English ladies. Kind thoughts and beautiful necklace equally precious. Kindly convey my grateful thanks to all subscribers."

Having read out the telegram, Sir Montague Bowden demanded an apology from those who had impugned his honour, and I understand that he got an unqualified one. After that, male tongues were let loose; the wildest conjectures flew about as to the probable solution of what appeared a more curious mystery than ever. By evening the papers had got hold of the incident, and all those who were interested in the affair shook their heads and looked portentously wise.

But the hero of the hour was certainly Captain Saunders. From having been voted either a knave or a fool, or both, he was declared all at once to be possessed of all the qualities which had made England great: prudence, astuteness, and tenacity. However, as a matter of fact, nobody knew what had actually happened; the august lady had the necklace and Captain Saunders was returning to England without a stain on his character, but as to how these two eminently satisfactory results had come about not even the wiseacres could say. Captain and Mrs. Saunders arrived in England a few days later; every one

was agog with curiosity, and the poor things had hardly stepped out of the train before they were besieged by newspaper men and pressed with questions.

The next morning the *Express Post* and the *Daily Thunderer* came out with exclusive interviews with Captain Saunders, who had made no secret of the extraordinary adventure which had once more placed him in possession of the necklace. It seems that he and his wife on coming out of the Madeleine Church on Easter Sunday were hustled at the top of the steps by a man whose face they did not see, and who pushed past them very hastily and roughly. Arthur Saunders at once thought of his pockets, and looked to see if his notecase had not disappeared. To his boundless astonishment his hand came in contact with a long, hard parcel in the outside pocket of his overcoat, and this parcel proved to be the velvet case containing the missing necklace.

Both he and his wife were flabbergasted at this discovery, and, scarcely believing in this amazing piece of good luck, they managed with the help of Mr. Haasberg, despite its being Easter Sunday, to obtain an interview with one of the great jewellers in the Rue de la Paix, who, well knowing the history of the missing necklace, was able to assure them that they had indeed been lucky enough to regain possession of their treasure. That same evening they left by the train de luxe, having been fortunate enough to secure seats; needless to say that the necklace was safely stowed away inside Captain Saunders's breast pocket.

All was indeed well that ended so well. But the history of the disappearance and reappearance of the pearl necklace has remained a baffling mystery to this day. Neither the Saunderses nor Mr. Haasberg ever departed one iota from the circumstantial story which they had originally told, and no one ever heard another word about the man with the walrus moustache and the gold-rimmed spectacles: the French police are still after him in connection with the assault on le Capitaine Saunders, but no trace of him was ever found.

To some people this was a conclusive proof of guilt, but then, having stolen the necklace, why should he have restored it? Though the pearls were very beautiful and there were a great number of them beautifully matched, there was nothing abnormal about them either in size or colour; there never could be any difficulty for an expert thief to dispose of the pearls to Continental dealers. The same argument would of course apply to Mr. Haasberg, whom some wiseacres still persisted in accusing. If he stole the necklace why should he have restored it? Nothing could be easier than for a business man who travelled a great deal on the Continent to sell a parcel of pearls. And there always remained the unanswered question: Why did Saunders take the pearls out of the strong-room, and where was he taking them to when he was assaulted and robbed?

Did the man with the walrus moustache really call at the Majestic that night? And if he was innocent, why did he disappear? Why, why, why?

The case had very much interested me at the time, but the mystery was a nine days' wonder as far as I was concerned, and soon far more important matters than the temporary disappearance of a few rows of pearls occupied public attention.

It was really only last year when I renewed my acquaintance with the Old Man in the Corner, that I bethought myself once more of the mystery of the pearl necklace, and I felt the desire to hear what the spook-like creature's theory was upon the subject.

"The pearl necklace?" he said with a cackle. "Ah, yes, it caused a good bit of stir in its day, But people talked such a lot of irresponsible nonsense that thinking minds had not a chance of arriving at a sensible conclusion."

"No," I rejoined amiably. "But you did."

"Yes, you are right there." he replied, "I knew well enough where the puzzle lay. but it was not my business to put the police on the right track. And if I had I should have been the cause of making two innocent and clever people suffer more severely than the guilty party."

"Will you condescend to explain?" I asked, with an indulgent smile.

"Why should I not?" he retorted, and once again his thin fingers started to work on the inevitable piece of string. "It all lies in a nutshell, and is easily understandable if we realise that 'old Pasquier,' the man with the walrus moustache, was not the friend of the Saunderses, but their enemy."

I frowned. "Their enemy?"

"An old pal shall we say?" he retorted, "who knew something in the past history of one or the other of them that they did not wish their newest friends to know: really a blackmailer who, under the guise of comradeship, sat not infrequently at their fireside, watching an opportunity for extorting a heavy price for his silence and his good-will. Thus he could worm himself into their confidence; he knew their private life; he heard about the necklace, and decided that here was the long sought for opportunity at last.

"Think it all over and you will see how well the pieces of that jig-saw puzzle fit together and make a perfect picture. Pasquier calls on the Saunderses a day or two before their departure and springs his infamous proposal upon them then. For the time being Arthur succeeds in giving him the slip, his journey is not yet . . . the necklace is not yet in his possession . . . but he knows the true quality of the blackmailer now, and he is on the alert.

"He begins by going to Sir Montague Bowden and begging him to entrust the mission to somebody else. Judging by the butler's evidence, he even makes a clean breast of his troubles to Sir Montague who, however, makes light of them and advises consultation with Mr. Haasberg, who perhaps would undertake the journey. In any case it is too late to make fresh arrangements at this hour. Very reluctantly now, and hoping for the best, the Saunderses make a start. But the blackmailer, too, is on the alert, he has succeeded in spying upon them and in tracing them to the Majestic in Paris. The situation now has become terribly serious, for the blackmailer has thrown

off the mask and demands the necklace under threats which apparently the Saunderses did not dare defy.

"But they are both clever and resourceful, and as soon as Haasberg's arrival rids them temporarily of their tormentor, they put their heads together and invent a plot which was destined to free them for ever from the threats of Pasquier and at the same time would enable them to honour the trust which had been placed in them by the committee. In any case, they had until the morrow to make up their minds. Remember the words which Mr. Haasberg overheard on the part of Pasquier: 'S'long, old man. I'll wait till to-morrow!' Anyway, Pasquier must have gone off that evening confident that he had Captain Saunders entirely in his power, and that the wretched man would on the morrow hand over the necklace without demur.

"Whether Arthur Saunders confided in Haasberg or not is doubtful. Personally I think not. I believe that he and Mary did the whole thing between them. Arthur having parted from his brother-in-law went back to the hotel, took the necklace out of the strong-room and then left it in Mary's charge. He threw the tin box away, there where it would surely be found again. Then he went as far as the Rue de Moncigny and crouched, seemingly unconscious, in the blind alley, having previously taken the precaution of saturating his handkerchief with chloroform.

"Thus the two clever conspirators cut the ground from under the blackmailer's feet, for the latter now had the police after him for an assault, which he might find very difficult to disprove, even if he cleared himself of the charge of having stolen the necklace. Anyway he would remain a discredited man, and his threats would in the future be defined, because if he dared come out in the open after that, public feeling would be so bitter against him for a crime which he had not committed that he would never be listened to if he tried to do Captain Saunders an injury. And it was with a view of keeping public indignation at boiling pitch against the supposed thief that the Saunderses kept up the comedy for so long.

To my mind that was a very clever move. Then they came out with the story of the restoration of the necklace and became the heroes of the hour.

"Think it over," the funny creature went on, as he finally stuffed his bit of string back into his pocket and rose from the table, "think it over and you will realise at once that everything happened just as I have related, and that it is the only theory that fits in with the facts that are known; you'll also agree with me, I think, that Captain and Mrs. Saunders chose the one way of ridding themselves effectually of a dangerous blackmailer. The police were after him for a long time, as they still believed that he had something to do with the theft of the necklace and with the assault on M. le Capitaine Saunders. But presently 1914 came along and what became of the man with the walrus moustache no one ever knew. What his nationality was was never stated at the time, but whatever it was, it would, I imagine, be a bar against his obtaining a visa on his passport for the purpose of visiting England and blackmailing Arthur Saunders.

"But it was a curious case."

KARL W. DETZER

THE MUSIC OF ROBERT THE DEVIL

ROMANCE rarely shows its airy pink frills to a detective bureau. In rags or in olive drab uniform, crime is too sordid a business. Its damaging facts are hard-shelled, and dreams are superstitions and superstitions are bunk. So it was left for a sleepy Normandy village to discover Robert the Devil, and the American secret police profited thereby.

Sergeant Carl Faulkner, of the Le Mans branch of the Division of Criminal Investigation, went to Ballon for a rest. He had been overworking, with several others, in a chase half across France behind a gang of thieves. The chateau robbers we called them, after their profitable specialty of looting castles while the owners were away.

Five of the band had been taken; eight or nine still were free. They were unscrupulous ruffians, known to be handy with their salvaged automatics. The night Sergeant Faulkner came in from an unsuccessful pursuit, he looked too tired to send on the trail again.

"Ride north," I told him, "and take a rest. Forget this case for a while. Try a trip up through the hills of Normandy and see what you can see. The French police are reporting 'outrages'—wine and chickens mostly. Run up to Sille le Guillaume first, and call on the gendarmes. Cross over from there to Ballon and Mamers. Be gone a week, call me up each night on the telephone."

The next day a chugging motorcycle carried Sergeant Faulkner down the steep byways of Le Mans into the country. That night he called me from Domfront—his report was nil. He turned east the following morning, past

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the Bagnoles of the Orne, over to Alençon, and south to the old town of Ballon.

American deserters? In Ballon? Chattering peasants did not even have time to answer the question. They stood nervously at the street corners; in groups, never a man alone. Sergeant Faulkner inquired the trouble.

Robert the Devil was back!

"And who is Robert?" Sergeant Faulkner demanded inquisitively.

"Robert the Devil?" Amazed townsfolk stared him down. It was incredulous! "You do not know? You do not know of Robert?"

The fact was, Sergeant Faulkner learned, that Robert first came to Ballon nine hundred years ago. And here he was again! Like an M. P. or a division inspector, he just would not keep down!

There is a little inn overhanging the river in that quaint Normandy town, where the fortunate traveler may indulge in *poisson à la rivière.*

"You want fish for dinner?" asks the madame. *"Bon!* Right away. Henri!" She calls her husband. "There is company, catch a fish!"

Henri runs to the river. You wait ten minutes, possibly fifteen, and the fish is ready.

Faulkner entered the inn. There was no chance for fish that night! Henri was too busy talking. The fathers of the town clattered their wooden shoes around the hearth of the tap-room, shrugging their shoulders under their dusty black smocks. Henri volunteered the story.

"It is the wicked Bluebeard," he explained, while the crowd unwillingly let him do the talking. *"Oui,* it is the same. That was his castle, upon the hills. Nine hundred years ago he built it. A bad man—with the manners of a cow!

"William the Norman was our ruler then. Robert was his brother——"

"His father," a villager interrupted.

"His brother," Henri repeated. "He stole our land and made himself king. His wife was pretty, with yellow hair.

But after a while, he tired of her. And what do you think, M'seer! He threw her over the rocks like an old shoe, and came down here to this inn—this very same inn, M'seer—and stole the daughter of the innkeeper. Her father was a brave man, M'seer, just as I am, as all innkeepers are. But what could he do against a castle full of soldiers? I ask you, what?"

Faulkner filled the old fellow's glass.

"A few weeks and Robert tired of this wife. So he threw her, also, over the rocks—like a pail of dish water, M'seer—and took the wineseller's daughter. Have I told you he played a violin? That night he climbed up to his tower—ah, a scamp he was!—and played. Here in the town they heard him. And after that they listened often, and could hear his wives scream. One girl after another, he was never satisfied. And there were no priests and no laws in those days. So he threw them off the cliff and each time played his fiddle at night."

"What has that to do now with all these poor papas wringing their hands?" asked Faulkner, whose bent was toward the immediate present rather than the past.

Henri shook his head.

"Ah, M'seer, you must not hurry me!" he said reprovingly. "When Robert the Devil was tired of all the girls in Ballon, he took a girl from Falaise, named Arlette, whose father was the town butcher. Butchers have pride, M'seer, and they, like innkeepers, are brave men. This one called in all the people of three towns, and he gave them butchering knives, and they went up to the castle, and they killed Robert the Devil. I am proud to be a Norman when I think of it. But that night, after they had thrown his body over the cliff, and had locked the doors, and broken the drawbridge—pst—they heard him playing the fiddle upon his tower."

"Rats!" responded Sergeant Faulkner.

"And once every fifty years he comes back, with his horse and his soldiers, and for five or six days he lives in the castle again, and robs the poor townspeople. And at night he plays the fiddle, just as he used to play it, nine

hundred years ago. My grandfather heard him when he was a little boy, heard hoofs in the street at night, and a fiddle on the hilltop, and in the morning my grandmother's pig was gone. Once when I was a little boy, he came again and stole our cow.

"And now, M'seer, *attende*—pay attention! Three nights ago he returned, this Robert the Devil, howling through the town. The priest went to church, *vite!* But his prayers were no good. In the morning my wine cellar was broken and forty bottles were gone. The butcher lost eight chickens. Last night they came again—the mayor found his cellar open and his champagne departed. And last night—why are you laughing? Last night he played his violin up there on the hilltop. I heard it with these ears. Yes, M'seer, and I had drunk only two cognacs and a little wine. Every one heard it, even the Widow Brabant, who claims there are no ghosts at all."

Sergeant Faulkner was puzzled. He sat back at his table, trying to think it out. The landlord hobbled to the hearth to throw new fagots on the fire. The townsmen were making a very brave noise over their glasses, and the shutters all were tight. An excited scramble sounded at the front door, a shriek; a girl burst through, and fell, whimpering, by the hearth.

"*Robert le Diable!*" she screamed. "I heard him—just now—I heard him!"

"Where? What is he doing?" Sergeant Faulkner was the first to recover his wits.

"His violin—don't you hear it? He is playing in the castle."

Henri, being a prudent man, and having upon his shoulders the safety of his guests as well as his own, was blocking the door. First he turned the great brass key, then pushed home an iron bolt. He dropped double bars across the entry, and stacked up two tables and a chair.

The villagers stirred nervously. Big eyed, soft spoken, they drank their cognac and eau de vie in gulps, which is unusual for a Frenchman. They had turned their backs to the chimney, better to watch the door. The wind, which

had risen with the dark, whined across the roof and clucked in the eaves; it rattled an old shutter on the barn with dismal insistence.

"If it's music, I want to hear it." Faulkner said. "Let me out of the door."

"Non, non, non."

"Yes, yes, yes!" Faulkner was anxious to investigate first hand. "Is there no gendarme? Is there no one in town who is willing to go up to the castle with me?"

"The doors were sealed by our fathers' fathers," Henri answered. "Besides, you would be destroyed."

"I have a neat little automatic here." Faulkner touched his pocket. "Come on, let me out."

"A gun is useless against spirits," implored the landlord, "and besides, I fear to open the door again."

But after a long chatter, in which the townsmen took part, the tables were pulled back, the key turned, and the bars lifted just enough for the lithe form of the young American to slip through.

It was a gusty night. The sky was streaked with white-edged ribbons of cloud, and an old moon, looking pale and unhealthy, peered through the rifts. A wind from the English Channel whipped down across the hills, shrilling through the village streets, and banging at loose shutters, while it danced on rickety spouts and made a sound as of many wooden shoes.

Above the town, lowering down upon it, the tall walls of a medieval castle leaned out in black broken lines against the sky. It was a forbidding eminence, this high cliff, and its crown of masonry had an air of foreboding. The peasants might be right, predicting ill omen to any one who ventured to it! But as for the sealed doors—even from the village street Faulkner made out upper windows, through which the light was seeping, showing decayed rafters and fallen roofs.

He stood there a moment, accustoming his eyes to the dark and his ears to the windy night. The street was deserted. Here and there friendly lamp-glow showed through

chinks in discreet shutters. A single dismal gaslight burned smokily in the public square.

Then the headlong winds were calmer for a moment. The rattle of spouts and shutters stopped, the whistle at the eaves. Faulkner listened.

Music came down from the castle. A plaintive note, somewhat squeaking, drifted on the breeze—another—an eerie mournful melody. Robert the Devil was playing again!

Faulkner turned quickly toward the door he had left. Henri had barred it against him. The American sergeant pounded upon the panel, but the tap-room was silent; the frightened landlord refused him entrance. Faulkner thought of the gendarmerie, only a hundred meters away, and running again toward the street, blundered into the front door of the police station.

There was a roar of dogs as he entered, and an answering wrangle as the gendarmes on watch beat the great creatures back under the tables. Faulkner had been there in the afternoon, so he was known.

"Ah, he has heard it!" the chief of the post whispered.

Over in the corner, a small, fat, ancient fellow nodded very sagely.

"You bet I have!" Faulkner answered. "I want one of you to go up to that dump-heap with me."

"*Non, non, non!* I am a married man, I have children to support!" answered the chief.

"Nor I either!" replied the other.

"Is there no one in this town who is brave enough?" asked Faulkner.

"Brave? Ho! Foolish, you mean! Yes, there is one. Old Papa Roudout, who is new from Paris. Yes, the old gendarme you saw this afternoon, with mustaches like the wings of a dove. He has been here only two weeks, and doesn't understand. He was foolish as you—last night he wanted some one to go there with him."

"Where is he now?"

"At home in bed—the sixth house on your right."

Faulkner went back into the street, and in thirty seconds

was hammering the sixth gate to the right. The third time he knocked an upper casement opened, and a night-cap stuck out.

"In the name of the seven saints," cried a voice, "what is the disturbance?"

Faulkner replied with a few words, spoken low, words known only to the secret police of the American forces, and to gendarmes and *agents civils*.

"Bon!" The casement slapped shut. A chain rattled and the street door opened. Faulkner stepped into the hallway of the gendarme's house. They talked quickly, and the old man, carrying candle in one hand and night-cap in the other, hurried above to dress.

He looked three times into his gun barrel before he started, and felt for extra cartridges in his pouch. Then, already panting, he followed Faulkner.

The music could not be heard as they started, but once, while they climbed the cliffs, stopping often for breath, a gust of wind carried the notes again, this time in sharp gay rhythms.

On the hilltop an old apple tree leaned against the wall. The unsuperstitious gendarme had seen it in his daytime prowls. Cleats nailed against it gave foothold on the sill of an unglazed window. Silently the pair slipped into the dark and mildewed castle.

It was a great barn of a place, with vacant windows and whole patches of the roof caved in. The two moved cautiously, feeling ahead on the damp stone floors with their hands. Up a curved and broken stairway and into a long passage they crawled. Light gleamed through a door at the opposite end, flickering and unsteady. The air was sweet with the odor of roasting chicken.

Then a man spoke. Faulkner grinned when he heard the accents and rose stealthily to his knees. He reached back—the gendarme's pistol was out.

"Ready?"

The three figures on the hearth did not move when a young American and an old Frenchman crossed the threshold. The two guns were pointed too steadily.

"Put up your hands!" Faulkner ordered in English. "High!"

Twenty minutes later three unshaved members of the chateau gang sat in a cell in the Ballon gendarmerie. They had come without waiting for the chicken to finish roasting. Sergeant Faulkner had returned to confiscate their loot: silver pillaged from old castles, linen, wine, chickens stolen from the countryside.

"I'm through resting in the villages!" he said the next day when he delivered his prisoners in the Le Mans office. "Hereafter I go to Paris, or some other quiet place that has no ancestors."

I looked at the deserters he had captured. They were not youngsters; older men and one a Mexican.

"How did you guess they were Americans?" I asked.

"Guess?" Sergeant Faulkner grinned across the table. "I didn't think it likely, sir, that this Robert the Devil bird would be playing *My Old Kentucky Home* on a mouth organ."

KARL W. DETZER

THROUGH BOLTED DOORS

In the bedraggled village of Montriel, which looked down from its weedy hillside upon one of the great American concentration camps in France, townsmen found Vance Jordan—murdered. It was a morning of sour winds and sorrowful skies, with the rain pattering down. Vance Jordan, late private, A. E. F., lay face up in the mud, with a hole in his head and his last bottle of cognac still half full beside him.

And an hour later, in this same hamlet of Montriel, other startled townsmen were running with the news that the Widow Jacquier had been killed. Inquisitive neighbors, who missed her at her accustomed early chores, had knocked upon the door of her one-room house, on the lonely edge of the place, and upon receiving no answer, called Papa Chenou.

Papa Chenou broke down the door and discovered the widow's body.

A bold and determined gendarme, this Papa Chenou, who allowed the evil deeds of his community to rest heavily on his shoulders. The news came to my office through two sources. First, a military police captain commanding the battalion at the camp, notified the district provost marshal and he relayed the message to me. And Pape Chenou, determined that the Americans should share in the anxiety, telegraphed for aid.

We had met before, this stalwart old gendarme and I, over glasses of cider in wayside inns, while we compared notes. His village hovered above the valley where lay the American camp, an invitation to restless feet. And certain

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of his townsmen, finding the war a deplorable affair which shortened their money belts, had turned to the profitable expedient of cognac and raw, harsh eau de vie for soldiers.

There had been trouble aplenty in Montriel before this —street fights between reveling Americans and surly Frenchmen; plundered hen roosts; sly barter in stolen sugar and chocolate and tobacco between native miscreants and long-fingered quartermaster laborers. But murder! Two murders in one night!

Papa Chenou puffed out his cheeks till his white walrus mustache stiffened.

Montriel is a one-street town. To find the gendarmerie is not difficult. It stands resolutely between the church and hotel, guarding a half-dozen shops and cafés. hanging tight together. Papa Chenou was in front of his office when I drove up. He had his watch in hand, annoyed at the time I had spent in reaching his secluded town—a ride of some eighteen kilos from my office.

"It is this way," he began. "Your man, Jordan—yes, of course he is your man! The American officers came an hour ago and identified him and took away the body. Your man Jordan was seen in the streets most of the evening. An affair with a girl of our village, a woman named Joan, had brought him here often enough."

"Where did you find his body?" I asked.

"There!" Papa Chenou pointed down the weed-grown hillside toward the railroad tracks, beyond which lay the American camp. "A hundred meters down that hill. There is a track of blood, where he crawled, showing plain all the way from the street yonder."

"Did he have a gun?"

"*Non, Monsieur!* No gun could we find. The bullet, though, was of a .32 caliber."

"The Americans do not use so small a gun!" I broke in, hoping for once that the French would have no opportunity to tack a crime upon us.

"This one did!" Papa Chenou shook his head decisively. "He is dead. And the Widow Jacquier is dead. The same gun killed both of them."

"The same gun?"

"The same sized bullet, anyway. But come! There is the strangest part of this whole business. We'll go to her house and let you scratch your brains a while."

The residence of the murdered widow was a small one-roomed affair, with thick stone walls, heavily shuttered windows, and an air of blank poverty around it. One of Papa Chenou's force, a sallow gendarme with the air of having ridden too far on his official duties, hung wearily over his bicycle, gossiping with the natives who crowded in front of the place.

Papa Chenou had broken the door—of that there was no question! It lay its length in the street. Its hinges were bent, the bolt was severed off short. We went in directly. The widow's one room was neat as nails, furnished with the bizarre simplicity of provincial village homes. A bed stood in one corner, a table in another. The cooking chimney spread across the back wall, with its families of shining copper pots and pans hung above the mantel, in widowly precision.

There were only two windows in the room. The French tax a building according to the number of its panes of glass, and the Widow Jacquier was poor. Both openings were close shuttered. The French window blinds were of solid wood, not slatted in the American fashion, with a crescent, or a small star, or *fleur de lis* chiseled into the upper half, to admit what might be considered a proper amount of air.

On the bed lay the widow—a poor little heap of cold skin and skeleton. Spots of blood had dried on the fresh lace pillow slip, run down from a hole in her forehead. The bullet was in the pillow, a .32 caliber.

"But the strange thing is," the gendarme pointed out, "the glass was open but the shutters were barred."

"On the the inside?" I interrupted.

"On the inside," Papa Chenow repeated wisely, "and the door was bolted, also on the inside. There is no gun in the house. We have searched."

Papa Chenou waited for me to scratch my head in the

approved gendarmian manner. Instead, I searched. True, it was impossible for any one to have shot the woman and have escaped, leaving doors and windows bolted after him. She could not have shot herself—there was no gun.

"The woman next door says that she heard a shot, perhaps two shots, after the whole town was in bed, at ten o'clock last night," Papa Chenou related. "The *chef de gare,* who commands our railroad station, was coming up the hill to the town about the same time, and he too heard shooting. But he thought it was only drunken socialists celebrating, and went home to bed like the honest citizen he is. Oh, these Americans!"

My friend of the French police stopped to wring his hands.

"Oh, these French!" I answered. "An American soldier has been murdered as well as a Frenchwoman. You have no proof that it wasn't a Frenchman shot both of them!"

"Through locked doors? Monsieur, no Frenchman could! Only Americans are so smart as that!"

That settled it.

We interviewed the neighbors first. They were willing to talk—some of them thought they had heard shooting about ten the night before. But there were three shots.

Three?

They were not sure! They thought three.

Had the old widow any enemies? Any family? Money? No, no, no! Had she a revolver? Again a shaking of heads.

We returned to the gendarmerie, where Papa Chenou had arranged the girl Joan should be. She was a robust young woman, sullen and flippant by turns, attempting to win friendship with compliments, trying to throw us off our quest for details of her acquaintance with Private Jordan. Her memory was conveniently unsatisfactory.

"Yes." She smoothed her woolen skirt. "He was my friend, he was at my house last night. But he went away early, nine o'clock."

"He had a gun?"

"Oh, no, never! Only a bottle of cognac!"

We questioned her. She talked. But there was little we

learned, except that she was genuinely sorry, in her way, that this American had died. We hinted at other admirers. She blushed and could think of none. A full two hours we queried. When we came out of the interview, we had no more knowledge than we took in, except that other Americans had been claiming the girl's attention. But she knew none of their names, or pretended not to know.

I had come to believe it was coincidence when we dismissed her. The murder of Private Jordan had nothing to do with the death of this simple French widow. The two crimes were unrelated. Callous tragedy, with her freakish humor, had been on two separate errands to Montriel the night before.

I left Papa Chenou, agreeing to return that night to the gendarmerie. I should tell him then what facts had developed in Private Jordan's company.

Back in the American camp, a board of inquiry was sifting the evidence it had. From Captain Bob Klaehn, president of the board, I found what I already surmised; that Private Vance Jordan was an insubordinate chap, often absent without leave, drinking incessantly, ugly when drunk, and regularly in the guard-house. Of his associates I could learn nothing; no one would own him as a friend.

I did not return to Montriel that night. Investigations in the camp detained me. And the next day when I went back, hopelessly, Papa Chenou was absent from his office.

"You are to meet him at the house of Monsieur Joseph Rambault," the clerk told me. "He left hurriedly."

"And who is Monsieur Rambault?" I inquired.

"The richest man in town," the clerk answered solemnly, "an invalid who never leaves his room."

I asked for more details. Monsieur Rambault, I learned, was the village banker. What was more, he lived directly across the street from the murdered Widow Jacquier.

It was a more pretentious dwelling than that of the unfortunate neighbor, of stone, two stories high, with low hanging eaves, built flush of the road—there were no sidewalks in ragged Montriel. A stern-faced woman, the sister

of the banker, refused me admission. I requested Papa Chenou. He came, after an interminable wait. His rough old face was streaked with tears. He carried his ink bottle in his right hand, in his left a quill pen and a bundle of *procès verbal* blanks. His talkative air was gone; instead he was serious, official.

Saying scarcely anything, he led me to Monsieur Rambault. It was a clean, bright, orderly second-story room that looked out on the street. I found the banker, a yellow shadow of a man, propped on his pillow. He, too, was weeping. Beside his bed on a chair lay a pistol, caliber .32.

Papa Chenou walked the floor nervously. I waited.

"I must tell it!" he said at length, and pulled me toward the window. "Monsieur Rambault has confessed. He killed your man Jordan——"

"Monsieur, Monsieur, it was an accident!" Monsieur Rambault interrupted.

"He knows that!" Papa Chenou retorted. "What else could it be?"

"Monsieur Rambault," the brigadier explained to me, "is an invalid. He does the town banking here, never leaves his room. Ten o'clock, night before last, he was in bed, working on his accounts. Some one climbed up on the wall beside the house and into the window—a soldier, wearing American uniform.

"The money is there," Papa Chenou continued. "See? In that tin box by his bed? Monsieur Rambault always keeps a revolver under his pillow to protect it. The American—ah, he was a savage!—stood on the sill and said something in English, which our good banker does not understand. He was swinging a club. Monsieur Rambault shot—once—twice—and the third time the American dropped into the street."

The gendarme cleared his throat and looked apprehensively at the wasted figure on the bed. The old man lay with his head fallen forward on his narrow chest, with only his moving fingers, gripping the flowered coverlet, to prove that he still heard.

"Monsieur Rambault was horrified," Papa Chenou declared. "He is a good man, Monsieur, whom the priest visits twice each month and on holidays. He was overcome. He fell back, faint. He was like a child asleep, he knows not how long. It was his sister, come to bring the fresh bread and cheese, who aroused him. She called me.

"So we know who killed your American robber. Now, who murdered our peaceful French widow?"

"You fired three shots?" I asked.

Monsieur Rambault raised his eyes and nodded.

"Three shots," the gendarme answered for him. "See, it is a five-shooter. Three of the chambers are empty."

"One bullet killed Jordan," I said. "Where are the other two?"

There was a long pause. Papa Chenou looked at me in astonishment.

"It could not be!" he finally protested.

We crossed the street to the one-room house. The way was deserted now, where only yesterday the whole village had gathered to discuss the news—a strange people, the French, who permit not even tragedy to keep them long from their daily work.

The widow's body had been taken away. Nothing else had been removed, even the shutters still were closed. I lay down where the woman had met her death and looked up at the window. Through the little crescent in the solid blind I made out the open window of the banker's bedroom across the street.

"Here, Papa Chenou," I suggested. "Lie down, tell me what you see."

Gingerly, he spread out on the bed. Then he nodded, his lips very tight.

"I understand," he admitted. "The first shot went wild. Yes, it came there, through the slit in the shutter. He killed her too; poor Monsieur Rambault!"

"But the third? He shot three times."

We returned to the other second-story room.

There in the plastered sill, we dug out with our knives a slug of lead that had once been a revolver bullet.

"I shall see the *procurateur*," Papa Chenou announced to Monsieur Rambault. "The French will know it was not your fault. And the Americans?" He turned to me.

"Could not convict." I answered.

KARL W. DETZER

NEGLECT OF DUTY

On the hearth of the old French fireplace a gust of wind picked up a handful of gray ashes and fluttered them about. I watched their dust whirl and crumble. The secret was safe.

There are times when a man's official duties and his personal desires run at cross currents. The rule book tells him one thing; his conscience another. And then some one else may force a decision for him.

So it happened in the case of the forty thousand francs which disappeared one night from the trunk of Colonel Joyce. Duty was plain. An arrest, a murmur of sympathy and of condemnation, a regiment's reputation soiled, imprisonment for a man at fault—my duty demanded all these. On the other hand, Colonel Joyce made a sacrifice for the honor of his regiment, and I watched the reports flame up and die to ashes in that old French fireplace, and was glad.

The affair began one rainy afternoon in June, one of those persistently dreary days. The fire on the hearth was smoking. Out in the garden of the Division of Criminal Investigation office in Le Mans, a fountain joined its voice to the less musical trickle of the rain. Below in the sergeant's quarters, I heard the operators on the afternoon shift reporting for duty.

A motorcycle put-putted to a halt under my window and I looked down, wondering which operator was returning. But they were not D. C. I. men who climbed out and looked at the housefronts, searching for the number; instead, strangers, apparently American officers. They

(From "True Tales of the D. C. I.," by Karl W. Detzer. Bobbs-Merrill Company. Copyright, 1925, by Karl W. Detzer.)

found it in a minute, and clanged the iron gate. A clerk announced them.

Captain Morton, supply officer, and Captain Fink, adjutant, of an artillery regiment, billeted near La Ferté Bernard, wished to see me on official business. I welcomed them to the private office.

"We've had a nasty affair in our regiment," Captain Fink said at once, "a rotten piece of work. We reported it to the military police, and they tried to get into touch with you, but the telephone wouldn't work. So we said we should hunt you up ourselves. The military police captain told us you were the officer to investigate."

"Tell me all about it," I directed, and called a clerk to make notes.

"We are officers of the —— Field Artillery," Captain Fink explained. "You've heard of us. We've a mighty good record for a recruit outfit. We're on our way home now, stopping off here till they send for us at the base port. We've been here three weeks, billeted all over the La Ferté Bernard area. Our headquarters is an old chateau; colonel's quarters and staff officers in the chateau itself. For our office we have an old hunting lodge across the lagoon."

"You've had trouble?" I asked.

"Money gone," the adjutant said shortly. "Battery B had turned over to Colonel Joyce, our commanding officer, its battery fund—forty thousand francs."

"Forty thousand francs!" I exclaimed.

Captain Fink repeated it.

"They had a good deal of money before they came overseas," he explained. "Home town people gave it to them as they were starting, and there was no way of spending it when we got here. Besides that, they're good fellows in that outfit, and have been saving considerable. We've been on the march and no bank. So the colonel volunteered to keep the fund with his confidential papers, and the battery commander was mighty glad to shift the responsibility.

"Well—last night it disappeared."

I sat observing the two officers, Captain Fink, young, boyish, trained and tanned, yet with a look of gentleness about him, and the supply officer, older than most captains, a short, thick, gray man, wrinkling his brow and trying to think this business out. Both were upset naturally.

"We hate to have this thing ruin our good record, just as we're starting home!" added Captain Fink. "We've had five citations and not a mark against us."

That night I journeyed back to La Ferté Bernard with them in a D. C. I. car, while a pair of operators from the Le Mans office followed with the motorcycle. It was approaching dusk when we arrived. Colonel Joyce, a rubber coat about his shoulders, was pacing the gravel walk, worried, anxious, heedless of the rain. He invited me to his quarters at once.

"You see, it was a big lot of money, too much!" He had seated himself stiffly at one of the tables and jerked his head toward the trunk at the side of his bed. "Eight thousand dollars, practically. That's a big sum of money, too big to keep in an old trunk. It was my own fault, that."

I crossed over to the trunk and examined it. The lock and hinges were not even scratched.

"When did you see the money last?" I asked.

"Last evening. About five-thirty, it was, I think. Captain Fink was going to Le Mans to do a little business for me, and the captain of B Battery asked him to take some of the money along and get fresh fruit. I unlocked the trunk myself, and took out the envelope—here it is." He held up a brown "official" envelope. "I counted out three fifty-franc notes. I put the rest back, snapped the rubber band on it, and replaced it again in the trunk."

"I beg your pardon, sir," Captain Fink broke in, for he and Captain Morton had been invited to the conference. "If the colonel remembers, he gave me the envelope, and told me to put it in, under the water-proof sheet—remember?"

"That's true. You did. That's a second witness." The

colonel chuckled humorlessly. "I was beginning to wonder if I hadn't put it back, if my memory was doing me tricks. But to go on. I locked the trunk before I left the room. Olcott—he's my orderly, honest as daylight—sat here on guard till my bedtime, as he always does.

"I turned in at nine o'clock and read in bed till nearly midnight. I slept till seven. Captain Fink wakened me, coming home. He had broken down his motorcycle and had pushed it to the nearest village and had slept there, rather than walk home through the rain. It was his coming, as I said, that awakened me.

"At eight o'clock I looked at the envelope. Just happened to, while hunting something else in my trunk. It was empty. And mind you, Captain, the thing had not been alone one second, and I have the only key."

I questioned him still further, and the captains, too. It seemed that one Grafton, a battery cook, who had a taste for lemon extracts, and whose buddies considered him worthless, had been seen snooping around the chateau just after dark. He was the only suspect they could name. He had not been arrested nor questioned.

"Will you send for him, please?" I directed.

Grafton came in, greasy, untidy, stoop-shouldered; with a tricky expression and an eye that roved about, never stopping on any object long. I talked to him. He evaded my questions. I released him an hour later, privately deciding to watch him.

The D. C. I. operators, the two who had followed with the motorcycle, had stopped in the town. They were dressed in uniform, and although both were sergeants, they flashed no stripes on their sleeves. These two, I decided, should go into the regiment—orders are fixed easily under such circumstances—and the next morning they dropped off their packs in the orderly room of B Battery, and were assigned to that organization, for return to the States.

Sergeant Jordan, the more stalwart of the two, went on duty around the officers' quarters. The other, Sergeant Stevens, shammed a lame foot, and immediately was set

at kitchen police, a detail which he had hoped for. It would give him a chance to be near Grafton, the cook, and men on police detail talk more than those at drill.

Back in Le Mans, I myself returned to other duties. For three days I received only laconic messages. Sergeant Stevens, thoroughgoing and cautious, merely was "listening-in." His telegrams each night only said: "No report, D 3 S," the latter being his signature. However, on the fourth day, a longer message rushed in, bringing announcement of some queer clue unearthed at the old chateau near La Ferté Bernard.

"Case lining up," it reported. "Search for building in Le Mans, probably café, recently painted red."

The D. C. I. staff were used to bizarre descriptions of men wanted.

"Look for a fat colonel with white side-whiskers; a thin private with gray hair"—we had many kinds of orders. This was the strangest yet. Le Mans operators were asked to search for a red house, a red café, any building painted red—recently.

Before night reports began to come in. A carriage in the stable of an eccentric nobleman had been enameled dark red and green two weeks before. A chair in a house in the restricted district, where Americans were prohibited from entering the vice zones, had recently been painted "dark pink." The central Y. M. C. A. hut had been decorating its reception room dark red, maroon really.

Stevens replied with the statement that the paint he wanted was bright red. I consulted Monsieur Legal, Deputy Superintendent of the French Police.

"Ho! I have it," he answered at once. "The Café of the Red Pillar, just around the corner from our headquarters, was painted only the other day. It is a shady place."

When Stevens received my report, he wired again:

"Was American officer there last Tuesday night? Did he have money? His description?"

I sought the Café of the Red Pillar. Many a doughboy has crossed its untidy threshold and remembers its fat old madame and its talkative master. Police remember, too,

that there were upper rooms, reserved for friends of the management, where drinks stronger than "light wine and beer" were served incautiously. And there were girls——

I dropped in on the owner of the café immediately. More than once an enforcer of the law had talked to him. Crime and criminal investigation make strange bedfellows.

"Tuesday night?" The landlord grunted. "How can I remember? There are so many Americans here."

"Yes, but did any stay all night?"

"Oh, Monsieur! I never permit that! It is against the law."

We argued. I prompted his memory with the mention of several unpushed charges, which, if properly filed, might embarrass him.

"Ah, *oui, oui, oui!* I have it! The night it rained so! Yes, there was an officer stayed all night."

"An officer?"

"Yes, drunker than a Breton sailor he was, too. And he had money—five hundred—five thousand—fifty thousand francs! I know not how much."

"He was alone?"

"Yes."

"He was not!" I answered, for I had seen the old scamp's tongue trip.

"Well—not exactly. But understand, Monsieur, I need not incriminate myself."

"I understand that. Who was with him?"

"Katie."

"And who is Katie?"

"Katie is a lady. A Spanish lady. She has eyes—well, they buy her drinks for her, if you comprehend."

"Tell me the rest."

"Well, the officer came in, just for a drink. His rank? I can't tell. Only sergeants and military police, those are the only ranks I know. This one was very good-sized, perhaps a colonel."

"Perhaps not."

"The girl was waiting for him. And he didn't stop with one drink. After four or five, Katie told me they wanted

a private dining-room and supper. They were at supper a long time, and I saw the American's pocketbook. It was full as a profiteer's boot. Then about midnight, Katie came down and ordered a cab. She drove away.

"After a while, your officer rushed down-stairs, swearing in three languages, like a gipsy. He wanted to know where Katie was. I did not know. I was tired. I threw him out."

"How long had it been since you repainted the red pillar at the entrance?"

"That very afternoon, Monsieur."

"And this Katie—tell me more about her. Where can I find her?"

He wrinkled his eyes shrewdly.

"You are a good fellow, Monsieur." He leaned over and pinched my arm. "She sent word—there were some little things she wanted. She kept them here, her first husband's picture, and those things. She sent another girl for them. That afternoon she went to Spain. For Katie is Spanish, Monsieur, and if you ask me, she is a very wicked woman —*gentille, Monsieur,* ah, *très gentille,* but wicked!"

I rode through the misty night toward La Ferté Bernard and the mystery of the forty thousand francs. The town was dark when I reached it, with only the shy twinkling of lights behind drawn shutters. My car made a noisy circle in the *place,* and swung to a halt before the portals of the gendarmerie. I was known here, and through these officials, the two D. C. I. men had sent their messages. A sleepy clerk on duty in the front office told me that Sergeant Stevens was expected at any moment.

He limped as he came out of the dark. I told him of my discovery at the Café of the Red Pillar, and he stood by the desk, there in the dingy, stone-walled gendarmerie, nodding slowly, as if my tale of Katie and the officer with the francs fitted into his own idea of the crime.

"Come on, sir, I want to show you something," he said at last, and we walked from the town to the chateau, out in the broad fields beyond. It was nearly midnight, and the last soldiers out on pass for the evening were shouting

themselves weary along the road to the camp. Farms looked at us with dark blinded windows.

We crossed the park in front of the chateau, past the quiet guard-room at the gate lodge, where the officer of the day sat on sleepy watch and a sentry barked us to a halt. We circled the house, after the guard admitted us, and approached the sheds in the rear. Within a low door, Sergeant Stevens flashed his pocket lamp on a line of olive drab motorcycles, half a dozen, belonging to regimental headquarters.

One of them, standing apart from the rest, was spattered with mud. Stevens turned the beam of his light upon the leather saddle. There were spots of dirty brown streaked on it.

"Three days ago when it was fresh, that was red," Stevens explained. He led me up-stairs to the loft. "I found this while I was prowling around yesterday."

He brought out a raincoat, stained as the cycle.

"It was hidden here, stuffed in behind all this trash. It still was wet, and so was this."

He spread it out on his knee, and held the lamp close. Across one shoulder I saw a great smear of red paint. Slowly, while I watched, Sergeant Stevens turned the coat over. On the inside of the collar flap, stenciled clearly, I read the name:

Charles I. Fink,
Capt., F. A., U. S. A.

"Get to bed," I told the sergeant. "I'll talk to the colonel."

Back at the front door of the chateau, after I had succeeded in making my raps heard, I asked to see Colonel Joyce. It was past midnight, but the commanding officer was still dressed, except for his Sam Browne belt, which he had laid aside; smoking furiously, and with a stack of papers and magazines on his lap. No mistaking, the theft had not ceased to worry him.

Captain Fink, his adjutant, who had been awakened by my pounding, escorted me to him. The younger man was

nervous when we went into his chief's quarters. He was red-eyed and his mouth was drawn; his face, in the four or five days since I first saw him, had puffed into the telltale flush of too much cognac and eau de vie.

The colonel welcomed me eagerly. Had I any news? I placed my chair so that I sat between the two men and the door. Then I told the story, pieced together by Sergeant Stevens and me.

"And when this officer, whom I have not yet named," I concluded, "when he awakened that night in the Café of the Red Pillar, his own money and the money of the battery fund were gone."

I looked at the adjutant.

"Do you wish to finish it for me, Captain Fink?" I asked.

His nerves, worn ragged by drink and conscience and regret, seemed to buckle under, and he slouched forward, his head in his hands.

"Some of it is true," he admitted, "not all of it."

Colonel Joyce, who had been listening intently, somewhat puzzled, only half comprehending my story, jumped up, looking hard at me, and then shaking Fink's shoulder.

"What's that?" he shouted. "You? You?"

The disgraced adjutant nodded. Then he completed his own confession, uneasily, ashamed, looking down at the floor.

He had known Katie before, at Monte Carlo when he was on leave. A few weeks ago he had chanced upon her in Le Mans. He had been drinking then. She talked of Spain and urged him to go with her. The afternoon he started to town on business for the colonel, he again had had liquor.

"When you handed me the money to put back in the envelope—you were busy at your desk, sir—I stuffed it in my pocket, and put the envelope back empty. I was to meet Katie at the Red Pillar—the café. She was there all right, and talked again of Spain. It must be she dropped something in my glass. When I woke up, she was gone—

and all the money. At first I thought I would not come back, and then I decided to try to bluff it out."

He rose from his chair, a confessed embezzler, and stumbled toward me, his hands stretched out.

"I am ready—lock me up," he said.

"Wait!" Colonel Joyce made the command with a break in his voice that his men on the front never had heard.

He was a fine officer, this colonel, an army man of the old school, with a womanly gentleness under his bluff outside. While he stood there, staring perplexedly first at me, and then at his captain—his adjutant—the tan on his face paled to a yellow and he turned his head suddenly and strode to the window, where he hesitated a long while, looking out. His shoulders were shaking. It is a hard sight, a fine old officer weeping!

But when he came again into the light in the center of the room, his lip was stiff and he had taken back his military poise. Straight to his desk he went, felt through a litter of papers, and brought out a check-book. He wrote resolutely in it, tore loose the check, and called me to see.

It was made out for eight thousand dollars and an odd number of cents, the amount that had disappeared. Carefully he folded it, and dropped it into the official envelope. This he put back in his trunk, slammed shut the lid and turned the key.

"You may go, Fink. I can't call you captain again." He seemed to have forgotten me. "I have covered this shortage with my personal check. It is practically all I have saved since I came out of the academy, but I give it very gladly.

"I am not going to prosecute you—it would be too hard on my command. In three days we sail for the States, and in a few more you will be mustered out. I go my way, in the service, and you go yours—not in the service, by jove! In three weeks this regiment will be a memory. I want it to be a clean fair memory. We have done well, our men have been brave, and our officers have been gentlemen. Between now and the time we disband, I do

not want you to speak to me, except officially, and I shall not speak to you. After our splendid record, I will not disgrace our name. Go—I won't prosecute, for the honor of the regiment."

Fink stood up, suddenly gone sober. He saluted as he turned at the door. The colonel returned the salute.

"And now, Captain," he spoke in a low voice, and I saw him blinking the undisciplined tears out of his fine old eyes, "this has been a mistake, a very serious one. The money was not stolen, understand? Just mislaid. Just mislaid."

"I understand."

It was the next afternoon, in my office in Le Mans, that I watched the reports of Case 762 as we called it, flame up and burn, and scatter in tongue-tied ashes on the hearth. It was better that way.

KARL W. DETZER

NUMBER 52 RUE NATIONALE

REMEMBER the riot in Rue Nationale, Le Mans?

Some five thousand of you former doughboys recall it . . . that pleasant summer evening in 1919 when every one seemed crazy, when Frenchmen and Americans milled in the street, glass was crashing, pistol shots echoed across the town, and finally, two hours late, a battalion of French soldiers came charging down on us. Perhaps you remember the house at Number 52, which was the center of that mysterious turmoil.

Weird tales you heard, astounding tales of murder, of executions, of spies. They couldn't be true, all those thousand floating rumors. At least you wondered . . . and now, to clear up the matter, I am setting down the story of Number 52 as I know it.

It was a gaunt, tall, dirty old house, its windows shuttered tight and its door guarded by iron spikes. By day it looked down impassively upon a narrow bustling street. By night no chink of light escaped from its windows. To the casual passer-by it was a deserted building, perhaps unoccupied for a hundred years.

But had you stood where I did that morning in February, 1919, you would have seen a thin waver of yellow smoke slipping from one of its chimneypots. It was from a window I looked, in the rear top floor of the provost marshal's office on Rue Bourge Belle.

"Madden," I said to my first sergeant; "I believe that place at Number 52 Rue Nationale is occupied."

He peered across the house-tops.

"You're right, sir."

(From "True Tales of the D. C. I.," by Karl W. Detzer. Bobbs-Merrill Company. Copyright, 1925, by Karl W. Detzer.)

And that was the beginning of it all.

For the house at 52 Rue Nationale, in the next six months, gained a reputation up and down the homecoming A. E. F. I believe it ranked ahead of that tall, dirty, Apache roost in Spanish town, Bordeaux, as a mystery mansion in the minds of American soldiers.

I say that was the beginning. So far as we were concerned it was. But the actual start of the affair was in America, at the time our grandfathers were proud of their blue or their gray. It began with that other war, and ended in the A. E. F.

At the time of our Civil War there came to America a swift and graceful Paris dancer, Mademoiselle Louise. She performed in New York about a year. Then, one day, she disappeared. And army officers, respectable citizens, mothers, police officials, when they checked their notes, decided that her disappearance was fortunate indeed. For she had been a busy little blackmailer in her year on this side. She had plied a groveling trade with remarkable skill. She had secured wealth.

Mademoiselle Louise appeared in Paris several years later, once more poor. And in France, where a Paris dancer is less of a sensation than in America, she was forced into a new trade. The police caught her, after many years, picking pockets. She was fifty when she came out of prison.

And now, on this morning of February, 1919, never having heard of her, I looked across housetops at the smoke from her breakfast fire, and wondered, absently, who she might be. At luncheon I mentioned that smoke to Monsieur Campou, chief of the second *arrondissement* of the city of Le Mans. and he laughed.

"Mademoiselle Louise, eh?" He sniffed his champagne *fine*. "An introduction might be of benefit, if you want to keep your soldiers away from bad influences. I'll take you to the lady this afternoon."

It was three o'clock when she admitted us, after clinking the chains at a barred door. I stared in amazement.

Campou had told me her story. Here was the woman who had danced into the heart of New York.

A swift graceful dancer! Well, she wasn't now. She stood awkwardly before us sniffling, an unclean, toothless, one-eyed, ugly old woman, smoking a vile pipe, and wriggling her bare toes. Her scant hair hung in straight oily strands around the bald spot atop her head. She was past eighty, Campou said; she looked a hundred and eighty. The house was dark, silent, foul. It was horribly uninviting.

"Here is a new officer to help watch you, Mam'selle," Campou explained cheerfully. "I have brought him so that he may see you himself. He is an American."

"Americans are dull!" replied Mademoiselle Louise. Her voice was high, sharp, rough.

"And the lady before you," Campou went on, "is a pickpocket, a thief, a kidnapper, a forger, a burglar, a blackmailer, a murderess. . . ."

"*Tch!*" she interrupted him. "I am not a murderess! I never killed any one! As to your other compliments . . . I am retired."

We went back into the sunlight, both of us glad to breathe fresh air.

"Keep an eye on her!" was Campou's warning. "Visit her house from time to time."

He explained that the French police, whenever they searched for a known criminal, looked first at Number 52.

So I went back to my office and made out a card in our file case for Mademoiselle Louise. I numbered it "52." By October it was the thickest file in our index.

The first affair at the house occurred less than a week after my formal introduction to its owner. The American provost marshal demanded that the military police, the Intelligence Department, and my office of the Division of Criminal Investigation clean up the ten thousand absentees without leave in the area, and do it at once. I went with Captain Hill of the military police to raid Number 52. Hiding in the shadows we waited for some one to enter. We were rewarded in less than an hour. A man appeared,

rapped, and the chains within rattled. We crowded in at his heels.

Some twenty Americans, drunk, mutinous, dirty, were sleeping on the floors of that old four-story shack. In airless rooms, in unclean corridors, under stairs we hauled out our soldiers, the unfortunates of the A. E. F. There were several petty thieves among them, deserters, men wanted.

Mademoiselle Louise stood at the head of the stair and invoked harm on our heads in loud old-fashioned United States. On the top floor we discovered three women, long wanted by the French as pickpockets. These we turned over to Monsieur Campou.

Captain Dick of the military police made the next raid alone. Among others he apprehended that night was an American captain for whom we had been searching for several days. He had been reported missing. He was sleeping off a spree in a messy room. How he got there he had no idea, he told us. Some one approached him in a café, called him a nice boy, and now his money all was gone.

We sent him back to his outfit.

That week for the first time came to our ears the story of the gipsies. They were musical beggars, wandering over the country, playing at village fairs. They appeared in a town in the morning, and that night everything which wasn't nailed down disappeared. So did the gipsies. Then they turned up again somewhere else, far away.

We did not connect them with Number 52 at first. That house had become silent. Police raids were less frequent, for no one ever was found, except the retired pickpocket. She laughed at the officers. So they avoided 52, except perhaps once a month, and then they discovered little or nothing.

But the gipsies worried us. They could speak English, soldiers told us. Villagers explained that they chattered French. We were surprised at that. Continental gipsies as a rule speak only Spanish or Roumanian, in addition to their own Romany tongue.

"They're Americans!" charged the French police.

We shook our heads.

Then in a small town near Alencon we first joined the French in searching a gipsy caravan. A carnival in a near-by village tooted its horns on the front streets while scamps stole at the back. The French blamed Americans.

We trailed the gipsies and the next night raided their wagons.

Nothing, absolutely nothing!

A few more weeks. More thefts. At last I sent an operator, a French-American, to follow the caravan. His first report came by telegraph the second night.

"Send help," it said. "Many Americans involved. Raid 52 Rue Nationale at once."

It was ten in the morning when I read it. I called upon Monsieur Campou. We decided to question Mademoiselle Louise. The house was silent, still dark, still unaired, but empty of Americans. Campou led the way to the cellar.

The stone floor was stacked with robbers' loot. Campou identified it. Here were the goods pilfered from a dozen villages by the gipsy band. Mademoiselle Louise was surprised . . . wondered how it got there. She accused me of stacking it there on a raid. She accused Campou of paying her to hide it.

She had told us nothing when we hauled the loot away. We only knew that the dark house at 52 Rue Nationale was linked somehow with that wandering band of gipsies. At five o'clock in the afternoon I started for the village of La Rote, where my operator was waiting. Five or six other D. C. I. men followed. We parked our cars on the edge of town.

"There are Americans with that gipsy crew!" the little detective explained. "I slipped into their camp last night. They were talking English in the wagons. I was just well hid when the dogs began to bark, so I had to run."

"But why advise raiding Number 52?" I demanded.

"I heard them talking about getting the stolen goods to Le Mans. It was the women who said that in French.

They said '52,' just as we do. I just guessed it was Rue Nationale."

We drove into the country until the last of the villagers was abed. Then slipping into town we set up our watch. There was an hour to wait. It rained. It blew a half gale and the air grew chilly, and then cold. At length, near the public square, a window smashed. A jeweler's window!

A. D. C. I. man, running toward the sound of the glass, saw two figures chasing away through the night. At midnight we surrounded the wagons, five of them. A flash from my electric torch started my operators, each in his own sector. We lined up the "gipsies."

Not Romanies! They disgraced the name. The men were American A. W. O. L.'s, the women were pupils of Mademoiselle Louise, from Number 52. They fought. When we searched for their weapons we found many .45 caliber American automatics.

We sent for the gendarmes of the town of La Rote, to turn over the horses and wagons. And while we were corralling the "gipsies" in their camp, an American Ford truck drove up . . . we captured the driver, who had been making night trips back to Number 52.

A court-martial handled the deserters. Because we could not prove that they had actually stolen a specific article, or which man had stolen which article, it tried the group only for desertion, and sent them back to the guard-house. The women, in French civil courts, were sentenced to ten years each. The gipsy caravan, ingeniously prepared under the shrewd direction of Mademoiselle Louise, was sold at government auction.

"So," said Monsieur Campou, "I advise raids on that house two or three times a week."

I did not like the job. It was unpleasant. We had a thousand other things to worry us. Mademoiselle Louise was once more in jail, for sheltering stolen property. But still the house remained open. Another woman, almost as old as she, and if anything a trifle dirtier, moved in and took charge.

Publicity kept the place empty for a week; no Americans ventured near it. Raid after raid, and we returned with empty hands. The military police, leaving the job to us because they were sick of the unhealthy smell of the house, cheered us from the street. Soon we too grew surfeited with it.

"Don't raid for three weeks," I ordered.

Le Mans filled with home-bound soldiers that night. A shipping tie-up halted all movements and no troops departed from the area for many days. Men, disgusted at the delay, went absent without leave. The reports at area headquarters showed a thousand soldiers absent from their companies.

They'll come back, was my attitude; why worry?

We were very busy that week. Another case, at the outer end of Rue Nationale, kept my whole force sleepless. Friday came, a chilly, windless, silent night, and I stood in front of the Restaurant de la Huisne, wondering what to do next in the case at hand.

Restaurant de la Huisne was off limits at the time. A bulky crate of stolen American merchandise had been discovered in the garret by a D. C. I. operator. An American had been stabbed several nights before in the grounds. And now came a report from one of my men that many Americans were in the restaurant.

They might be the fugitives I wanted. So I slipped into the yard, down through the brush, and close to a window. English floated through the shutters. Good United States English. Silver clinked. It seemed an orderly enough party. I crept close to the window and peered through a crack.

Two brigadier-generals and a flock of colonels were at supper. I backed away, wondering what to do. The night was very still. Along the River Huisne I heard the trickle of water as it fell over stones. Then . . . far away, down-town, three shots, close together.

My car was waiting at the gate. In an office a block away I called our own headquarters.

"Any report on shooting?" I asked the desk sergeant who answered the telephone.

"No," he answered, "but a riot call came from Number 52 about ten minutes ago. I sent two carloads of men, every one I could get hold of."

I don't know whether or not I hung up the receiver.

"Quick . . . Number 52."

The driver stepped on the gas.

A chattering crowd had collected half a block from the house. My car wormed through it, and we saw the lights of two of our own Fords across the street. The door of 52 stood open, with ax marks around its lock. A D. C. I. corporal stood guard.

"What happened?" I demanded.

"Don't know a thing about it!" he replied. "Sergeant Madden is here."

I hurried up the stair. A corporal ran past, his pistol in hand.

"What is it?" I asked again.

"Don't know, sir, except that some of them got out on the roof."

I galloped to the roof.

A shadow under the eaves proved to be Sergeant Madden, a leather billy strapped about his wrist.

"What is it?" I implored.

"Don't know, sir," he admitted, "I've been chasing them. They're all over the roofs!"

"Who? Why?"

"Be right back!" Madden shouted. "Better lie down, they took three or four shots at me behind those chimneys. I'm going to get our men to surround the block."

I was left alone on the roof of Number 52, feeling very foolish, very much excited, and not a little anxious. What had happened? What might happen next? What was it all about? Was I crazy?

This is what had happened.

The temporary landlady of Number 52, discovering certain American soldiers with no place to lay their heads, had invited them to sleep in her unsavory hostelry. The price was fifty centimes a night, with the understanding that they leave before daylight in the morning. She shel-

tered eighteen on this particular evening. They were not bad men, merely A. W. O. L.'s afraid to go back to their outfits. A real bad man was too wise; the place had had publicity, it might be raided.

One of her tenants was sensitive this Friday night. He became annoyed by the dirty floor at a late hour when every one else was asleep; better, he decided, to chance it on the streets. He had no matches, no flashlight. The place was black. But he knew his way to the stair. What he did not know was the queer habits of his aged landlady, who had chosen the top step as her roost for the night.

Groping his way through the dark he reached the landing. His foot caught there on something bony. He leaped. A hand reached out and grabbed his ankle, and with a wild shout he plunged down the stair.

The landlady was not so shrewd as Mademoiselle Louise. She only remembered her warning and set up a frightened cry.

"The police!" she screamed. "The police! Run! Escape!"

She fled to the cellar coal bin. The fastidious A. W. O. L., finding himself still alive but very bloody, discovered that the door was locked and galloped back up-stairs. A comrade's flashlight illuminated his face. Blood ran freely from his nose.

His fellows, aimlessly hunting a way out, questioned him. "What happened?"

"Police!" he answered. "Grabbed me; threw me downstairs."

"Police!" repeated seventeen others.

Twelve of them climbed to the top floor. There was a trap-door to the roof. Tiled gables made easy places to hide, and from Mademoiselle Louise's they slid to other roofs next door. They lay down behind chimneys to wait, three of them with pistols.

The other six, listening in the dark of the second floor, heard a new sound. A gendarme was pounding on the front door, asking what the noise was. The six were shy of police.

They did not wait to answer. They rushed to a balcony at the rear of the house, let themselves down and dropped.

It should have been a safe escape . . . in America, at least. In the town of Le Mans they reckoned without French architecture. The ground where they found themselves was the back yard of a photographer's shop, with a ten-foot stone wall on three sides. It was very dark. Across the fourth side of the yard extended the photographer's wide window, a ten-foot sheet of tricky glass.

The six fugitives charged to the rear of the yard. The high wall blocked them there. They doubled back. Still other walls. Their own comrades yelled on the roof. The cry put fear into the heels on the ground. Forward they galloped. Glass split, with a mighty crash, and the astonished six plunged through the window.

On the second floor the photographer and his wife arose in their bed and joined their voices to the outcry. Neighbors screamed. Noise reached the American provost marshal, whose office, I have said, looked down from the back on the untidy yard of Mademoiselle Louise. It was he turned in the riot call.

The D. C. I. responded. It took them ten minutes to reach 52 Rue Nationale. In those ten minutes six alarmed Americans, out of their wits, charged up and down the studio of the unfortunate photographer. A rack of postcards overturned. Shouts, cries, wails added to the turmoil.

The photographer appeared on the stair, dull ax in one hand, lamp in the other. The ax was taken forcibly. A terrorized doughboy began to chop his way out. He attacked the front door. The gendarme in the street yelled and retreated.

Iron shutters protected the door and windows. On this night, instead of keeping vandals out, the unsuspected shutters held *sauvages Américains* in.

The dull ax rained against the metal. D. C. I. operators, arriving, began to beat upon the outside of the door. The photographer's wife, poking her head out of an upper window, shrieked madly for protection.

Sergeant Madden led the attack across the roofs. The

shots I heard were aimed at him by one of the hostelry's fleeing guests. It was five minutes later I arrived. Hundreds of soldiers and civilians stood gaping at a safe distance. D. C. I. sergeants had rounded up the six frantic men in the photographer's shop and were on their way to the guard-house.

Searching the roofs we captured, one by one, all but two of the dozen who tried to escape that way. One whom we cornered on the roof of a three-story building kept pumping away at us until his pistol was empty and then dropped the three floors to the street. By the time we reached the spot he had been absorbed by the crowd. Nobody knew if he was hurt at all in the jump.

The other?

His was a vagabond's ignominy! How should he, a wandering missing man, know that the provost marshal would rent a house so near Mademoiselle Louise's establishment? How should he know what looked like roof was skylight?

Clerks, working late in the provost marshal's office, were annoyed by a rain of glass. They took off their green eye-shades and looked up. A pair of hobnails struck through the skylight. A very scared doughboy, gun in hand, dangled precariously on a thin piece of wood. They rescued and disarmed him.

The military police had arrived before this. The Intelligence Department was out in force. The gendarmerie supplied ten bearded and fearless fellows. The French barracks turned out two companies.

And at least five thousand doughboys, gaping in the streets, carried home a strange tale of the riot at Number 52. The "rioters" had been punished enough, we thought; we turned them back to their companies. Only one of them had actually fired upon us; he escaped. The others needed a doctor. He tied up their bloody noses, their sprained ankles, cut hands, all the marks of a battle with imaginary foes.

The temporary landlady was asleep on the coal pile when we visited the cellar. Monsieur Campou, being an

aggressive fellow of an original twist of mind, turned her over his knee and spanked her publicly, to the delight of a civilian gathering of neighbors in the morning. The photographer sued the American Government for ten thousand francs, because of "loss of sleep, property and peace of mind."

Mademoiselle Louise was already under arrest for harboring stolen property. After her trial she went to a French prison, blithely, for five years.

Number 52 was boarded up, padlocked and sealed with the proud seal of the French Republic. So far as we were concerned the case was closed.

And that's the story of what actually happened at Number 52, rumors and counter-rumors to the contrary. Monsieur Campou will tell it, with many gestures and dramatic poses, as often as you refill his little glass of cider.

KARL W. DETZER

THE GUILTY PARTY

On a quiet June night in the summer of 1919, Private John Jackson, A. E. F., slipped over a low stone wall and peered into the windows of a small café. French workmen were eating and drinking inside. The smell of good cookery floated out to the dark yard. Private Jackson reached into his pocket.

He stood in the dining-room when the Frenchmen looked up. An automatic pistol showed in his hand. He waved it at the diners and conversation stopped. A waitress, hurrying in from the kitchen, dropped a tray and screamed. The proprietress hurried in after her. She, too, screamed.

"Do any of you speak English?" Private Jackson demanded.

"I do!" It was the waitress. Of course she spoke English. All waitresses did.

"Then listen," Private Jackson went on calmly. "I don't want to hurt any of you. Just sit still, tell them, with their hands above the tables, and no one make any noise. I'll have some supper."

So he sat down at a table with his back against a wall. The other guests eyed him, their appetites gone. He had soup and fish, and beef and fried potatoes, and salad and an apple and cheese. These he washed down with Bordeaux rouge, and Barsac, and Sauterne, and Burgundy, with a snifter of cognac to touch it off. The pistol lay at his hand. Madame was attentive. The waitress scurried at his slightest order.

When he had finished he demanded a napkin, wiped his

(From "True Tales of the D. C. I.," by Karl W. Detzer. Bobbs-Merrill Company. Copyright, 1925, by Karl W. Detzer.)

mouth, thanked them all and said good night. He backed toward the window, and darkness in the rear of the old café enveloped him.

Madame, the proprietress, tipped back her head and screamed. The waitress wailed. The gentlemen guests drew their pocket knives, slashed the air, and demanded blood. A passing gendarme heard the disorder and entered timidly. He made copious notes. He forwarded these notes to the *prefet*. The *prefet* forwarded them to the commissaire, the commissaire forwarded them to the general of department. The general of department forwarded them to the commanding general of the American forces, who relayed them by telephone to the provost marshal, who sent for me.

Five days late!

But we started out on our search "for an American marauder." Twenty-five years old, he was said to be; "six feet tall, with a smooth face and ruddy complexion, blue eyes and a regulation American olive drab uniform."

There were approximately ten thousand men answering that description in our area. And we were five days late! I made a card for my index box, and thought the whole affair too bad. The fellow had enjoyed a good supper, had hurt no one . . . still, the honor of the American uniform must be upheld.

He couldn't be found. We didn't know his name, and there were other offenses in this same old town. A butcher was putting up his shutters a few nights later. Two Americans entered his shop. One slid a naked bayonet out of his sleeve. He promised to hack up the meat cutter and hang him on his own hooks. Hearing that, the butcher agreed to please them. So they took away ten pounds of steak, half a dozen sausages, and a variety of cheese.

"Murderers!" the meat cutter was screaming when a D. C. I. man ran up to him ten minutes later. "Thieves, sons of cows! I am ruined! I must sue the savage American government for ten thousand francs!"

Description? Two small men, rather dirty, looking much

alike, and with very ugly faces. They wore the conventional olive drab. Another case on our files.

Then the French police dropped a hint. The house by the railroad tracks five miles from town was dealing in American goods. We knew the place well enough; we had watched it for months. We swooped through its door at three in the morning. Blankets, bicycles, socks, shelter tents, canteens, even condiment cans were in the spoils. We shipped two trucks of pilfered army supplies back to the United States salvage warehouses.

We questioned the farmer who lived in the house by the tracks. He claimed that he had purchased the material.

"From whom?"

"Ah, from many Americans."

Good enough. The French police carted farmer and wife off to jail. Three D. C. I. men took up lodging in the house. No visitors came the first night. The guard remained under cover till the second night, when some one rapped on the door.

Two skinny Americans slipped in. They offered a bundle of blankets. My men, in civilian clothes, quietly put them under arrest. In the morning they came to my office for "questioning and disposition." It was easy to check up on them. They were not even A. W. O. L.'s. They were members, in good standing, of a big casual detachment billeted in the near-by city.

We pondered this case . . . and sent the guard back to the farm-house. The next night another American appeared, offering a stolen bicycle for sale. He joined his comrades at my office. He, too, was from the casual camp. The next night came three more . . . all from the same American outfit.

It seemed strange. Why should six good men suddenly turn thieves, and all of them hail from one small detachment of less than a thousand soldiers? We talked to them seriously. They all told the same story. They were hungry. They were getting no food. They had no money. Day after day they starved.

I sent to the commissary.

"Plenty of food," an officer of that organization insisted. "Lieutenant Joyce, mess officer for the outfit, gets full allowance of rations each day."

Lieutenant Joyce, mess officer for the outfit! I transferred a detective sergeant into the casual detachment next day. His report was short but powerful. It was telephoned the following afternoon.

"Rotten grub!"

And the same day came Private John Jackson, A. E. F., his wrists in irons, and his gun in the pocket of one of my operators. He had not been so successful this time. He had tried to wrest another meal by show of force, thinking not that the small untidy Frenchman in the corner of the café actually was Corporal Hollig, D. C. I.

He told the same story. He was hungry . . . hungry and broke—and a member of the same casual outfit.

A new cook was assigned to work at the casual kitchen. He knew little about cooking, having spent most of his life as a detective sergeant, but that did not unfit him for the kitchen there. Nothing to cook! Nothing to eat.

Commissary deliveries were made at four P. M. to that camp. Our bogus cook lay on his bunk, watching fresh meat and flour, canned goods and the regular supplies unloaded outside the door. At four-thirty sharp another truck appeared, a covered French machine. Lieutenant Joyce, mess officer, boosted practically all the fresh food into the second car.

The D. C. I. man only need follow the truck. He trailed it on a motorcycle till it backed to the door of a tidy prosperous store. The French driver, a well-to-do grocer, confessed. For three months he had been purchasing his entire stock from Lieutenant Joyce. He came to my office with the French police and my own man who apprehended him.

I called Colonel Pope, Provost Marshal, and told him of the case.

"These fellows, these men who have been sticking up cafés and selling condiment cans, have been hungry, hun-

gry enough to commit murder," I explained. "I'd like to turn them loose."

"Certainly!" he agreed. "Feed them well and send them back to their company. And you go out personally and get that man Joyce . . . lieutenant, you say? I don't care if he's a major-general! Bring him in to me!"

I had not seen Joyce myself, having avoided him purposely ever since we began to suspect him. Now I called at his office.

"Not in," said a sergeant.

"Where is he?"

"Oh, some dance . . . he's at a dance every night."

I checked over the possible list of social affairs which might interest him. There was a dance at the Y. W. C. A. dormitories. I went there first. The music was particularly gay. A pretty Y girl at the door greeted me.

"Lieutenant Joyce? Certainly, over there . . . little man with the long spurs."

"May I speak to you, Lieutenant?" I asked him in a lull.

He followed me to the door.

"You are under arrest," I told him. "No, don't talk now. Colonel Pope wants to speak to you. He's a better listener than I am."

"Oh, mercy!" said Lieutenant Joyce.

That night the mess officer slept uneasily, under lock and key. In the morning I dropped in to see him. He looked tortured. It was plain he was ill. A pale, nervous, blue-skinned man, he stood with his hands shaking before the provost marshal, and heard hard things said of his kind.

Still he denied the thefts, in the face of the French grocer's confession. The next morning he was a mental wreck. I took him to an American doctor.

"Morphine," said the physician. "How long have you been taking it?"

"Ever since I was taken sick . . . when I first came to this town, nearly a year ago."

"Where did you get it?"

"From Doctor Benoise, who had an office on Avenue de la République."

So he told the story behind the story. A pitiful tale it was, of suffering and dope. We put him on a train, headed for a base port; he's back in his home town now.

But the doctor was immune. The French code has nothing to compare with our Harrison Anti-Narcotic Act. There is no French law which prohibits a man from offering drugs to any and all who want them.

Was Private John Jackson guilty when, hungry, he held up a café? Were the famished casuals guilty when they sold condiment cans and ponchos to the old man in the house by the tracks? Was Lieutenant Joyce guilty when he sold groceries to pay the outrageous prices a doctor asked for the dope that he must have to keep him on his feet?

Doctor Benoise was the guilty party. So far as I know he still practises his trade.

There were other cases in which the guilty were unpunished and poor unfortunates suffered for them. Private Blake was murdered in the paymaster's office; Private Sheets shot him because he didn't know any better.

It rained that night in hilly Le Mans. Gutter spouts disgorged water noisily to the pavements. The clocks were striking ten as I left my car and climbed up the hill toward a house where guards were on duty.

Half-way there an American soldier passed me, riding a bicycle. He wore a courier sack on his shoulder—no doubt he was a messenger from the telegraph office. He was pedaling toward the office of the finance quartermaster, an old house some three blocks away. Messages were frequent to that building day and night.

I walked on. After three minutes, or possibly four, a shot rang out across the gusty night. Then another. After that the air was still except for the rattle of rain in gutters and the sighing of wind among the eaves. I started running back. There was no telling, in those cramped, tortuous streets, from which direction the sound came.

My car was waiting at a near-by intersection. The driver, after twenty-four hours of duty, was sleep at his wheel.

"Drive down that way, toward the Place d'Etoile!" I told him. "Go slow!"

We slid half-way down the hill when another car panted upward toward us. In it were military police. They, too, had heard the shots, and were sure they came from the neighborhood of the finance office. We swung back. Around the corner near the old cathedral, down a narrow byway we plunged. An electric light illuminated the arched entry-way to the finance office.

There, by the gate to a covered passageway, an American soldier lay upon stone flags. He was bleeding from the side. His face, turned up to the single white light, bore that ghastly, vacant expression that wipes out emotions to many men when they lie dying. Over him, pistol in hand, stood another American, in uniform, looking down calmly.

As we approached he lifted the pistol.

"Stand back!" he warned.

Then he saw the police brassards on the men who came with us. The pistol lowered.

"Advance!" directed the soldier.

"Who shot him?" asked the police officer.

"I shot him," the boy answered.

There was a bicycle on the floor of the porch. Near it an official message pouch sprawled out, some of its documents tipped to the stones.

"That's a messenger from the telegraph office," one of the military policemen volunteered. "Blake's his name. Know him well."

"Is he alive?" some one else asked.

"Yes."

"Get him to the hospital in my car!" I ordered. It was only two hundred yards to the main gate of Camp Hospital 52.

"Where's the sergeant of the guard here?" I demanded, knowing that the finance office always was heavily

guarded. Great sums of money kept there made the precaution necessary.

"He's in the office there," the fellow with the gun answered.

"Give me that pistol!"

The boy complied willingly.

"You are under arrest. You, M. P., stir up the sergeant of the guard!"

The sergeant of the guard was at his desk, stunned, horrified, trying to get the police on the telephone.

"That's my man there, on post two!" he explained breathlessly. "I heard him talking to some one, then the next thing I knew he shot. Why do they give me such men? What can I do?"

"We'll be here later to talk to you, Sergeant," I explained. "Put some one else on that post. We're taking your sentry away."

The lad was calm when we returned to the covered court, still looking down at the blood upon the stones. My men had gone with the wounded soldier. Now they came back.

"Dead!" the driver announced. "Dead when we got there."

The boy who had killed him looked up. I thought I detected a smile on his face.

"What's your name, soldier?" I asked.

"Willy Sheets," he replied.

"Very well, Private Sheets, I arrest you, charging you with murder. You needn't talk now . . . take him to the car, Sergeant."

They led the murderer away. He laughed sheepishly, without emotion. He looked at the spot of blood on the floor, then stepped directly into it and left a red wet track against the stones as he went out into the night.

The military police were willing enough to turn this man over to the D. C. I. . . . it was an open and shut case of murder, but murder is an unpleasant business for all concerned. I took him to my office.

We questioned Willy Sheets that night. He stood before

me, not sullen, as most prisoners were, nor defiant, not even frightened. He had a weak mouth, blank eyes, a dull pudgy face.

"How old are you, Sheets?" I asked.

"Don't know," he answered.

"Don't know?"

"Some says I'm 'bout twenty-four."

"Where are you from?"

"Kaintucky."

"What part of Kentucky?"

"Back yonder other side o' the hills."

"How long have you been in the Army?"

"Right short time. Don't know 'zactly."

"Can you read?"

"Nope, ner write."

"Do you know the guard manual?"

"What's that?" asked Private Sheets, and he really wanted to know.

"Sit down there," I directed, "and tell me what happened. How did you come to kill that man to-night? Was he an old enemy? Did you know him before?"

"Never seen the creatur' afore."

"Why did you shoot him?"

"He come up and got my floor all wet."

"Well?"

"I told him to stay outside. He says he got a message."

"Well?"

"He brung his bicycle in. I told him he was getting the floor wet."

"Then what?"

"When I told him to take it out he laughed. He says I talk like a nigger, he says."

"Yes?"

"I don't, though!"

"Of course not. What did you do?"

"Why, I kilt him then! Sure I did!"

And that was the defense of Willy Sheets, murderer. A court-martial sat on his case, deliberating gravely and

earnestly. And Private Sheets received a sentence on a manslaughter charge, and went off to prison to serve five years.

He was not more than four years old mentally. He had lived his life in hills where the slightest insult means widows before morning. He was ignorant, but not to blame.

The officer who ordered an unbalanced youth out upon guard duty, who put a deadly weapon into the hands of the lad incapable of handling it, who set up a trap into which Private Blake unwittingly fell . . . that officer slept calmly in his bed.

Private Sheets went to prison. Private Blake died on duty, delivering official messages as he was ordered. No law touched the Guilty Party. . . .

A Frenchwoman was to blame for the affair at the Café de Bon Voyage.

Madame Rutt presided over the miserable dump which squatted on a side-road near one of the big American concentration barracks. Here gathered nightly soldiers from a muddy camp, dirty Frenchmen, ladies of easy consciences.

Madame Rutt, tall, fat, greedy, waddled among the tables, commercial jug in hand. It was wicked stuff she poured out of that jug. On early morning rides I have seen men aplenty asleep in near-by ditches, more dead than alive after an evening around madame's crackling fire.

Then one night . . . it was late summer, 1919 . . . came a call to headquarters. A fight was in progress at the Bon Voyage. I happened to be visiting in the office of the assistant provost marshal of the area. We made a hurried trip.

The fight was still in progress when we arrived. In fact it seemed to have been improving as it progressed. Mere official brassards and officers' insignia had no effect. When it was over there were five Americans in our hands, bloody, satiated with bad liquor, roaring for more blood. Madame Rutt had a hole in her head where her right

ear should have been. Tables were wrecked, windows smashed. In a garret three girls were hiding.

The Americans, whom we may call Smith, Jones, Henry, James and Frank, went into arrest, charged with rioting. A stiff court-martial listened to their stories. They were jumbled stories, for the stuff in the black jugs did not make for clear thinking and keen memory.

To the guard-house for three months each went, Smith and Jones and Henry and James and Frank. Five American doughboys, disgraced! The guilty party?

Madame Rutt seemed to get along nicely without her right ear. When last I saw her she was serving more liquid fire out of a black jug, and threatening to file suit against the American Army for the wreck of the Bon Voyage.

Which proves again that even in the best of wars the guard-house did not always claim its own, and the Guilty Party went on blithely about his or her affairs.

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